This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

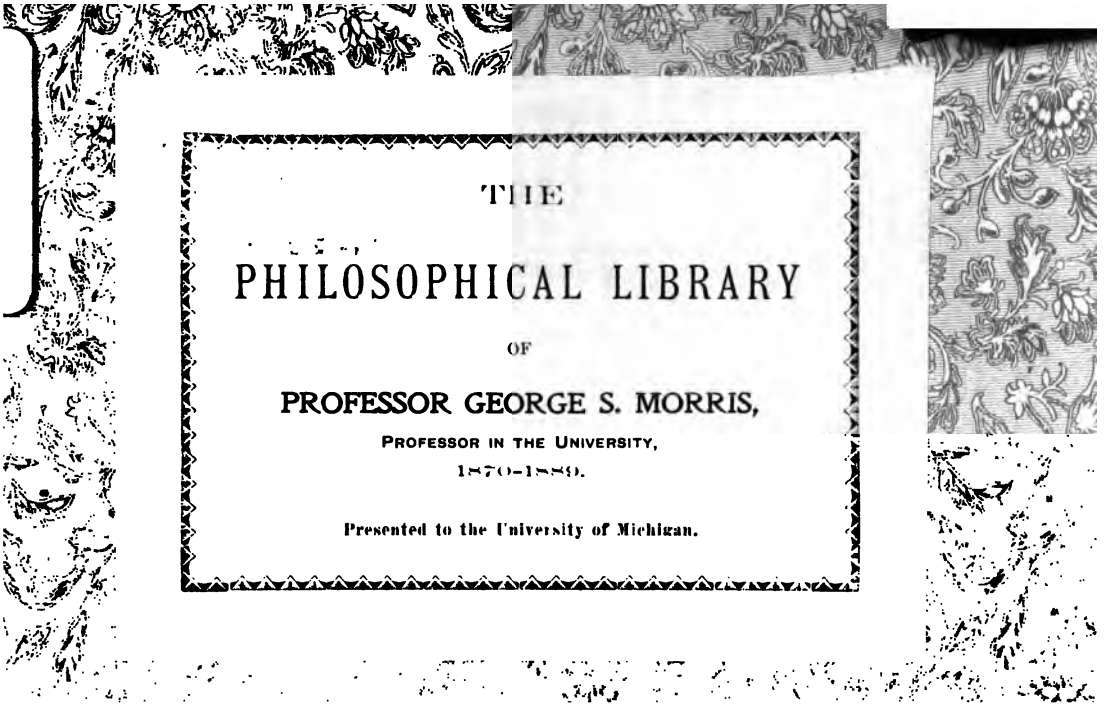
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

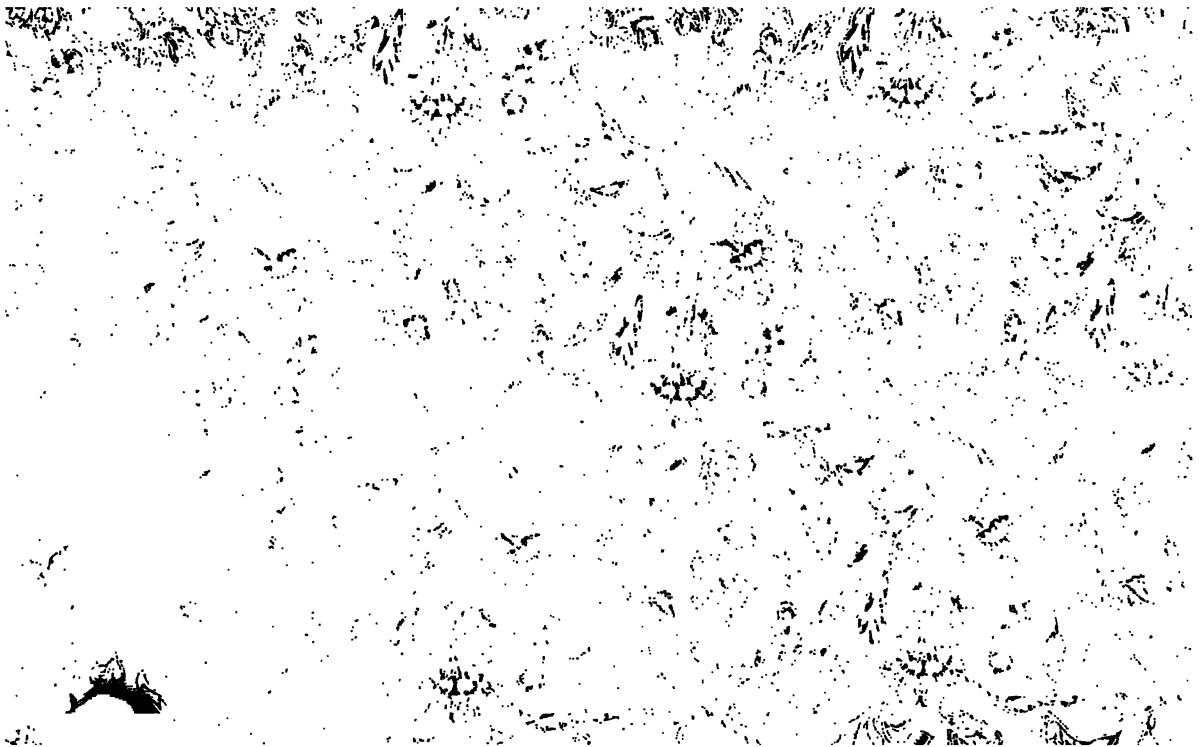
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

B 1,290,181


THE
PHILOSOPHICAL LIBRARY
OF
PROFESSOR GEORGE S. MORRIS,
PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY,
1870-1889.
Presented to the University of Michigan.



THE

PHILOSOPHICAL LIBRARY

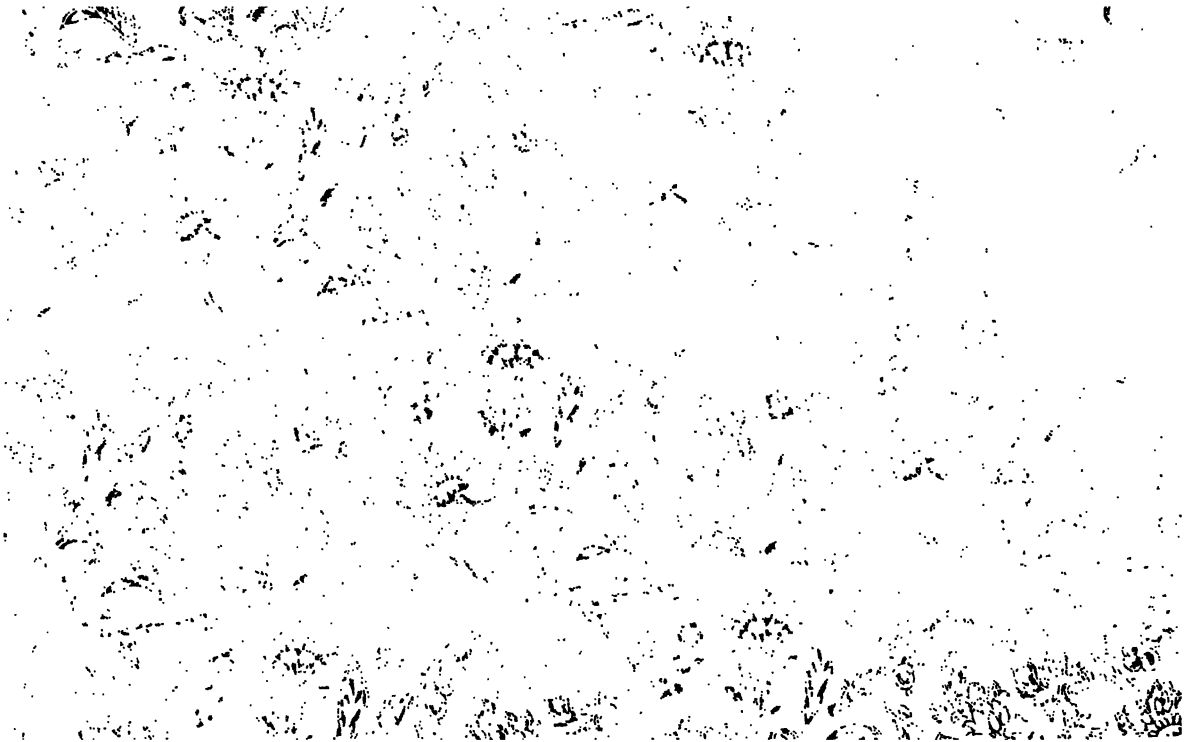
OF

PROFESSOR GEORGE S. MORRIS,

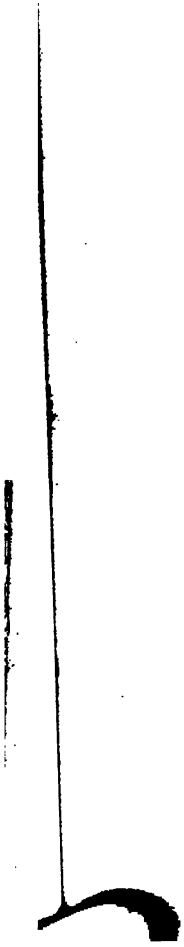
PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY,

1870–1889.

Presented to the University of Michigan.



B
2824
.E93



GERMAN PHILOSOPHICAL CLASSICS

FOR

ENGLISH READERS AND STUDENTS.

EDITED BY

GEORGE S. MORRIS.

FICHTE'S SCIENCE OF KNOWLEDGE.

VOLUMES ALREADY PUBLISHED.

KANT'S CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON. Prof. Geo. S. Morris.

SCHELLING'S TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM. Prof. John Watson.

FICHTE'S SCIENCE OF KNOWLEDGE. Dr. C. C. Everett.

IN PREPARATION.

HEGEL'S ÆSTHETICS. Prof. J. S. Kedney.

HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION. Dr. A. M. Fairbairn.

HEGEL'S LOGIC. Dr. Wm. T. Harris.

HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY AND OF THE STATE.

KANT'S ETHICS. Pres. Noah Porter.

KANT'S CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT.

LEIBNITZ'S NEW ESSAYS CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING. Prof. G. H. Howison.

FICHTE'S

SCIENCE OF KNOWLEDGE.

A CRITICAL EXPOSITION.

BY

CHARLES CARROLL EVERETT, D.D.

BUSSEY PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY, AUTHOR OF "THE SCIENCE OF THOUGHT."

CHICAGO:
S. C. GRIGGS AND COMPANY.
1884.

B
28.4
.F93

COPYRIGHT, 1884,

BY S. C. GRIGGS AND COMPANY.

PRESS OF KNIGHT & LEONARD. CHICAGO

PREFACE.

IN the prospectus of the series to which this volume belongs, the following statement was made:

"Each volume will be devoted to the critical exposition of some one masterpiece belonging to the history of German philosophy. The aim in each case will be to furnish a clear and attractive statement of the special substance and purport of the original author's argument, to interpret and elucidate the same by reference to the historic and acknowledged results of philosophic inquiry, to give an independent estimate of merits and deficiencies, and especially to show, as occasion may require, in what way German thought contains the natural complement, or the much needed corrective, of British speculation."

In accordance with this plan, the present volume will be chiefly devoted to a study of Fichte's Principles of the Complete Science of Knowledge.* Reference will be made to his other writings, sufficient, it is hoped, to show the relation which the results reached in this work bear to his system as a whole.

* Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre.

It would be too much to say that no system of philosophy can be understood till it is believed. It is at least true, however, that no system can be understood until belief in it is seen to be possible. I shall, therefore, identify myself as closely as possible with the work before us, making the freest use of the material furnished by Fichte, and seeking to make its reasoning seem conclusive where that is possible; and plausible where plausibility is all that can be hoped. Criticism will not be introduced in the course of the discussion, except in cases where a process of thought may be better understood by its aid. A brief criticism will, however, be added at the close of the work, which may perhaps sufficiently indicate the limitations of Fichte's philosophy.

C. C. EVERETT.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY,
May, 1884.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN.

Personal character of Fichte's philosophy . . 1
His childhood and youth 3
His relations with Kant 6
Early writings 9
At Jena 9
At Berlin 13
The war 14
His death 16
Summary of his life 17

CHAPTER II.

PROBLEMS CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO KANT.

General relation of Fichte to Kant . . . 18
I. The Deduction of the Categories . . . 21
Kant's assumption of the Categories from without 21
The relation of this assumption to his system in general 23
The importance of Fichte's attempt at deduction 23

II. The Thing-in-itself 24
Illogical assumption of the Thing-in-itself by Kant 25
Fichte's interpretation of Kant 27
Suggestion in regard to the source of Kant's assumption 30
Possible methods according to which Fichte may dispose of the Thing-in-itself in accordance with the principles of Kant's philosophy 31
III. Problems Suggested by the Practical Reason 32
Contradictory nature of Kant's treatment of these problems 33
Fichte's early interest in them 38
IV. Unity in General 39
Lack of unity in Kant's system 39
Kant's recognition of the fact that unity had not been reached by him 40
Fichte's point of departure from Kant as stated by himself 41

CHAPTER III.

THE PROBLEMS CONSIDERED IN THEMSELVES.

Importance of such consideration . . . 43
I. The *A priori* Method in Philosophy . . . 44
Objections to this method 45
These objections answered 46

II. The Ultimate Reality 50
Fichte's recognition of the fundamental question in philosophy 50
Phenomenal character of the objective world 50
This recognized by the popular philosophy . 53
Difficulty of reaching the thought of anything beyond phenomena 54
And of proving its existence 55
Mill's attempt at proof criticised . . . 55
A better method also fails 58
Herbert Spencer's position unsatisfactory . 60
Importance of the attempt to reach the Ultimate Reality 61

CHAPTER IV.

THE I AND THE ME.

Fichte's fundamental proposition, $A=A$ . . 65
Propositions of identity in general 67
Basis of the proposition, $A=A$ 69
Explanation of terms 71
Deduction of the identity of the I, for the proposition above given 72
Definition of the I 76
Criticism of this by Herbart 81
Reply to this criticism 83
The unity of self-consciousness 86
The Category of Reality 88

CHAPTER V.

THE NOT-ME AND ITS RELATION TO THE I.

A second proposition needed 90
It is the Proposition of Negation 91
The contradiction contained in it 93
The solution of the contradiction, involving a third proposition 95
Repetition and explanation of fundamental propositions 96
The Infinite I 99

CHAPTER VI.

THE METHOD OF FICHTE AS SUGGESTED BY THE PRINCIPLES ALREADY LAID DOWN.

Analytic and synthetic propositions 102
Thetic propositions 105
Fichte's method 106

CHAPTER VII.

THE ANTINOMY OF THE NOT-ME.

The proposition which forms the basis of the theoretical part of the system. 108
The antinomy contained in this 109
Translation of this into common speech . . 110

Solution of this sought in the "Sum of Reality" 111
A difficulty still remains 113
Attempt at solution by the Category of Causality, which is the method of realism. . . 115
Attempt at solution by the Category of Substantiality, which is the method of idealism . 117
The results compared 121
Neither method wholly succeeds 123
Attempt at solution by the assumption of an Independent Activity 124
This considered under the Category of Causality 126
And under that of Substantiality 127
In which latter case it is found to be the Productive Imagination 129
Summary of a more minute discussion . . . 130
By which the Not-me and the Me are seen to stand to one another in a polar relation, so that each is exclusive of the other and yet dependent upon it 132
Practical solution of the difficulty involved in this 133
The nature of substance discussed 135
The difficulty remains 137
Final attempt at solution by the assumption of a limit, or by Quantitative Realism . . . 137
Different forms of idealism and realism compared 140
The antinomy still remains and is theoretically insoluble 144

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRACTICAL SOLUTION OF THE ANTINOMY.

The psychological nature of the antinomy . . 146
Practical solution (Critical Idealism) . . . 150
Comparison with Kant 153
Source of sense of limit in two-fold activity of the I 156
The two activities of the I compared, and the source of the Categorical Imperative thereby found 160
General result and comparison with Kant . . 163
Knowledge of the objective world only through the infinite activity of the I 169
True nature of the activity of the I . . . 177
Comparison with Spinozism 178
And with Stoicism 180
The infinite striving of the I; its nature . . 180
And the possibility of its interruption . . . 184
General summary 188
Nature of the system of Fichte 190

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEDUCTION OF PERCEPTION AND OTHER MENTAL PROCESSES.

Nature and method of the undertaking. . . 193
I. Perception 195
General conditions of perception 195

The primal function of the imagination in perception 199
The understanding 200
The notion of matter 201
And that of externality 202
Sensation 203
Relation of activity and passivity in perception 204
II. Thought 205
III. The Power of Judgment and its Relation to the Understanding 207
The judgment 207
Its relation to the understanding 208
IV. The Reason 210
V. The Highest Act of Abstraction, and the Final Relation of the Not-me to the I . . 211
The absoluteness of the I 215

CHAPTER X.

DEDUCTION OF THE WORLD OF OBJECTS, AND ITS RELATION TO THE ACTIVITY OF THE I.

I. The Longing for Change 216
The striving 216
The sense of longing resulting from this . 218
II. The Objective World 219
III. The World of Objects 221
Meaning of terms 221
The standard in the perception of objects taken from the perception of self . . . 222
Each *causa sui* 222

Practically the I is limited 224
Whence comes the idea of matter. 224
The object must also be limited 226
How this is accomplished 226
IV. Space 227
We turn to the consideration of outer relations 227
In which there is mutual exclusion . . . 228
Which supposes a common sphere to which each object is related 228
This cannot be a thing 229
And can have no other attribute than this relation 229
In regard to it the I has freedom of position. 229
It is Space 230
Space distinctions dependent on objects . . 230
And thus arbitrary and fluctuating . . . 231
V. Time 231
In this, fluctuation is impossible 231
The past is wholly ideal 232
Yet the recognition of it unavoidable . . 232
VI. The Nature of the Change Desired . . 233
The fact of change assumed 234
How it is recognized 234
The explanation of the desire for change, showing that satisfaction can never be reached 235
VII. The Longing for Harmony and Completeness 238
What is required for these 238
VIII. The Absolute Harmony; the Moral Law and its Content 239

The antinomy between the absolute impulse (the Categorical Imperative) and the impulse to freedom 240
Its solution, by which a content for the moral law is reached 241

CHAPTER XI.

TRANSITION TO ONTOLOGY.

Summary of results reached 243
Indications of an ontology involved in these . 244
Further indications in the Ethics and the treatise on Natural Rights 246
Will, the substance of the I 247
Though this assumption rests on the Will itself 248
The deduction of the outer world 248
Independence found to be self-effacement . . 250
The Infinite I 253
Early indications of the Ontology 255
The Unity of the Spirit 255
God, the moral ordering of the universe . . 256
Proofs of the Divine Being 257
More definite statements in regard to God . . 258

CHAPTER XII.

ONTOLOGY.

Common assumption of a change of system . 261
Meaning of term, Being, in later works . . 261
Being and Existence 263

Schemata of existence 264
Difficulties in earlier works solved by the Ontology 266
The I 268
Reason of the certainty of the truths of reason, and of the absoluteness of the moral law . 269
Real difference between earlier and later statements 269
General view of universe 270
The attractiveness of the system with reference to religion 273

CHAPTER XIII.

COMPARISON WITH SCHOPENHAUER AND WITH HEGEL, CRITICISM, AND CONCLUSION.

Comparison with Schopenhauer 274
Comparison with Hegel 278
Criticism 281
Importance of the results reached by Fichte . 286

FICHTE'S SCIENCE OF KNOWLEDGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN.

BEFORE entering upon the study of the philosophy of Fichte, it will be well to glance for a moment at his character and life. I shall not attempt a biography, however brief, but shall merely call attention to certain facts that may in some degree serve our immediate purpose.

The philosophy of Fichte is more personal than most systems. It is the expression of the life and nature of its author. At first this personal element might seem to detract from the value of the system considered in larger relations. It is obvious, however, that this will depend on the character of the personality which the system manifests. So far as the spirit of Fichte fulfils the ideal of human nature, so far will the personal element in his philosophy give to it a greater worth, if not a wider acceptance. So far as his character is imperfect, so far will the personal element detract from the value of the system. In both these respects we find his philosophy affected by the characteristic which we are considering.

Superficially considered, Fichte was a man of imperious temperament, and somewhat mechanical in his methods. These two qualities gave him great power as an educator, while at the same time they occasionally introduced what may be called the schoolmaster element into his procedure,* and while his imperiousness sometimes complicated relationships that less self-assertion would have made simple. These characteristics, it must be repeated, are largely superficial and accidental to his nature. Deeper than this we find what has been too much overlooked, a real spirit of reverence and of docility. If Fichte so often claimed a mastery, it was because he felt his own strength and the weakness of those about him. When in the presence of one whom he could really reverence, he was as simple and reverent as a child.

Beneath these more external traits was his true nature. This was made up of an energy that could hardly be surpassed, of a power of love that was his inspiration, and of a passion for truth and for righteousness that pressed toward absolute satisfaction.

In all these respects, his system was the image of himself. Harsh, hard, and sometimes mechanical without, it had a heart of fire within. What seemed, looked at from the outside, to be the mere subtleties of logical analysis, were really the stages by which he was seeking to bring into the consciousness of his followers, the absoluteness of the moral law.

*Compare Fischer: Geschichte der Neuen Philosophie, 1869, V-I, 224.

There is another reason why a notice of the life of Fichte is an important preparation for the study of his philosophy. The interruptions that broke up his life disturbed also the orderly development of his system. The fragmentary manner in which he was thus forced to give his system to the world has been one great source of the misunderstandings in regard to it.

Fichte's childhood was in many respects the anticipation of his manhood. The occupation of pasturing geese, to which his childhood was devoted, must have been well suited to the reveries of which he was thus early fond. He would stand, we are told, for hours, looking into vacancy, to the neglect, one would think, of his feathered charge; but in later life he looked back to these hours of contemplation with grateful pleasure.

He early showed the instinct and the passion of the orator. The only manifestations of oratorical power that offered themselves to his life were the sermons of the parish church. These so entered into his heart that he could reproduce them with a force, one is tempted to think, sometimes greater than they originally possessed. A nobleman in the neighborhood, regretting that he was one Sunday too late for the sermon, was told of the goose-boy who could repeat it for him in such a way as would wholly make up his loss. The little fellow, being summoned, went into it with a will, and if he had not been interrupted would have reproduced the whole discourse. This was the beginning of his

fortune; for the gentleman was so pleased that he undertook the burden of his education. He died, indeed, not very much later, but the start had been made.

We find in his childhood the same ethical passion and the same pedagogical instinct that he always showed, whether in regard to himself or to others. He found that a story-book which his father had given him, the history of the "Horned Siegfried," * was absorbing too much of his time; he therefore heroically threw it into a stream, and with an almost broken heart saw it borne away. Later, when he was a young man, we find him treating himself with the same discipline, denying himself little pleasures merely for the sake of the denial.

One incident of his school life should be mentioned, it was so characteristic, and illustrates so well his later conduct. At the school there was a system of fagging. Fichte was placed under an older scholar, who played the tyrant. He determined to make a strike for independence. He satisfied his sense of justice by announcing to his tormenter what he should do if such treatment were continued. As this produced no effect, he started forth, fired by a sense of his wrongs, and also by romantic hopes suggested by the story of Robinson Crusoe, which he had been reading. He seems to have felt the attraction, which is so natural to

*The popular notion of the "Horned Siegfried" grew out of a misunderstanding or corruption of the epithet "horny," which expressed the invulnerability of the hero.

boys, for the sea; while the experience of a desert island appeared very tempting to him. As he was pursuing his way, it occurred to him, however, that he had been instructed to enter upon no important undertaking without prayer. He knelt on a hillock by the wayside, and as he arose from his knees the thought of his parents came to him, and of their grief at his departure. His inmost nature of love was awakened. He turned back and told his story; and it is pleasant to be able to add that he was relieved from the oppression which had driven him away.

During his whole youth, he was crippled for lack of means. He looked forward to the profession of theology, but he was obliged to break off his studies on account of poverty. The consistory of Saxony refused his petition for the aid often given to theological students. He was thus thrown wholly upon himself.

Much in the youth of Fichte reminds us of that of Carlyle. Like Carlyle, he had an intense desire to influence men, with not a very distinct view of the end toward which he would lead them. Like Carlyle, he was forced by poverty to accept the position of tutor in one family and another, and, like him, he was irked by the relations into which he was brought with uncongenial persons. In one place, his pedagogical spirit is shown by the fact that he undertook to drill the parents as well as the children; reading to them, every Saturday, a list of the mistakes they had committed during the week, in

the management of their children. At another time, after he had taken a long journey on foot to meet an engagement in Warsaw, he found that he was not acceptable to the lady who was to employ him. Among other things, his French accent was deplorable. Fichte admitted the justice of her criticism, but claimed that it was as good as she had a right to expect; and, by the threat of legal proceedings, made her pay him for his trouble and disappointment. This was a very important event in his life, as, by the money that he thus received, he was able to take a vacation. He hurried to Königsberg to make the personal acquaintance of Kant.

I have spoken of the docility and the loyalty of Fichte. He was fortunate in having objects that called forth his deepest love and reverence. Leibnitz first aroused his boyish enthusiasm; the Fräulein Rahn, to whom he became engaged, and whom he afterward married, received from him an uninterrupted devotion that influenced very largely his life; while to the philosopher, Kant, he yielded the whole homage of his youthful heart, and consecrated to him and his service his best powers. He held fast to this loyalty till Kant himself at last disowned the relationship.

I have compared Fichte to Carlyle. Happier than Carlyle, the craving of his spirit was to be satisfied by what he regarded as a gospel of joy and peace. He was to feel the power of this gospel in his own heart; and the utterance of it was to be the glad employment of his life.

It is strange how it is often by some apparent chance that we meet the great crises of our lives. Fichte was tutoring in such studies as offered themselves, when a young man expressed the wish to study with him the philosophy of Kant. Fichte assented, and perhaps did not think it worth while to inform the applicant that it would be first necessary to study Kant for himself. Thus it was that he met his destiny. While the external circumstances that led to his acquaintance with Kant seem so accidental, his spiritual development had reached the point that made this acquaintance essential to his peace. Indeed there can be no greater contrast than that between the way in which his spirit was growing into the need of Kant's succor, and the outer chance that brought the needed relief.

It was always the habit of Fichte to think with his pen. We have a fragment that was written in the year 1790, in which is revealed the inner crisis which his life had reached. It is entitled "Aphorisms in Regard to Religion and Deism." * In it he recognizes the great chasm that exists between the elements of our nature, between the intellect and the heart. The intellect can see nothing but a necessity by which God and man are alike bound. Sin is nothing for which one can be blamed. It is nothing that admits of forgiveness. It and its consequences spring alike inevitably from the nature of the individual. The heart, on the other hand, can not be satisfied by such a scheme. What is to be done?

* Fichte's Leben, etc., von I. H. Fichte, II, 15 et seq.

The only thing to be done is to draw a line beyond which speculation shall not pass. But can one do this? Can one do it, when this way of thinking is natural to him, when it is ingrained in his very being? — Here the fragment breaks off. The struggle between the head and the heart seems to admit of no issue. They could not be at peace; yet neither could yield to the other. That very year he wrote to his friend in regard to the philosophy of Kant, "This has given me a peace such as I never knew before." He had found, he says, "a philosophy that put his heart into harmony with his head," and he bids his friend, "Henceforth trust only your feeling, even if you cannot confute the cavillers that would reason it down. They shall be confuted, and indeed *they are confuted already*, only they do not yet understand the confutation."

To understand this sense of relief we must recognize the fact that Fichte had been entangled in a system of Determinism against which his spirit chafed, but from which he could find no relief. It was Kant who rescued him; and his reverence and his gratitude knew no bounds. He thanked him for everything, for peace in this life and for the hope of another; and wrote to a friend that he should devote the next years of his life to making the system of Kant known.

It should be noticed that it was not the theoretical part of Kant's work that so moved him. At the time of writing the fragment just referred to, Fichte was familiar with Kant's discussion of the

Antinomies. It was the Practical Reason that stirred his heart. It was the fact that a place had been found for the autonomy of the spirit; the discovery that the rigid necessity which had imprisoned him belonged only to the world of the intellect. The spirit itself had created this world, and was free from its tyranny.

About this time, in part to win the appreciation of Kant, Fichte published his "Attempt at a Critique of all Revelation." This work was conceived largely, though not wholly, in the Kantian spirit, and, through the accidental omission of the name of its author, it was received as an anonymous work of Kant. This mistake was the occasion of unbounded praise, which could not wholly be recalled when it was discovered that it was the production of an unknown student of theology. Shortly after, he published two treatises suggested by the French Revolution, that had stirred in his heart the largest hopes.

Of these writings, the first-named proved his good angel, and was the means of his obtaining a professorship at Jena. The writings on the French Revolution proved his bad angels. They gave him the reputation of being revolutionary and democratic in his thoughts and wishes; they made the obtaining of the Jena professorship somewhat difficult; they made him an object of suspicion at Jena; and finally, as he believed, were the real cause of his losing that position. Had Fichte been a man of facile manners and tact, these difficulties would, it

is probable, have soon disappeared. The opposite, however, was true. He made enemies, and sometimes thwarted the well meant efforts of his friends.

Considering everything, Fichte must be regarded as the ideal professor. Few students have been so fortunate as those that were brought under his influence. His philosophical lectures were profound, original, and full of life. Few lectures can have put a greater strain upon the minds of the listeners than these, and few lectures so abstruse could have brought more inspiration. There was a special inspiration to the students in the thought that a new system of philosophy, or, as many of them doubtless believed, the final philosophy, was being unrolled for the first time before their eyes.

Fichte, however, felt that with this scholastic labor his work was only half done. He had always the soul and the heart of a preacher. He yearned over the young lives that were about him, and could not rest without trying to help them. He undertook to give to the students lectures more popular and more directly stimulating to the spiritual nature than those which he gave officially. His lectures on the "Vocation of the Scholar" were thus given. They were received with enthusiasm by the students. It illustrates, however, the prejudice that existed against him, to notice the difficulties that were placed in his way. At one time the objection was that these lectures were given on Sunday, and thus put themselves into rivalry with the Church; al-

though, in fact, the hours selected were those which the Church had left unclaimed.

He saw the evils of the secret societies, which played a great part in the life of the student. He affected the students so strongly that they made overtures toward the dissolution of the fraternities. Had Fichte been the self-asserting man that he is often painted, he would have brought this matter to a happy conclusion. As it was, he put the affair into the hands of the Faculty, who managed it with such delays and such awkwardness that Fichte became to the students an object of suspicion. He was temporarily driven from the place by the fierceness of their misdirected wrath.

At Jena, the publication of Fichte's philosophical system proceeded regularly and systematically. First came the "Principles of the Complete Science of Knowledge." * Then came the system of "Natural Rights"; † and, later, his system of "Ethics." ‡ In these, his philosophy was gradually unfolded in its deeper significance. His philosophy of religion was to follow in its time. Had this development been completed, the system of Fichte would not have been the enigma that it has been.

This natural and healthy development of his system was, however, to be interrupted. The story of this interruption cannot here be given. It is enough to say that in a journal which he edited he brought forward his views of religion in their most

* Grundlage der Gesammten Wissenschaftslehre.
† Grundlage des Naturrechts. ‡ Das System der Sittenlehre.

negative and repellant form. Suspicion, as we have seen, was already turned toward him, and this publication brought all the hostile elements into activity. Possibly, however, the publication would, without the previous suspicion, have been sufficient to cause the excitement. Formal complaints were lodged against Fichte. Never did his lack of tact and his directness of method show themselves more strongly than in his defence of himself against these charges. In one defence, he spoke of the hatred which similar misrepresentations had produced against Voltaire. Probably this placing of himself by the side of Voltaire was the very worst thing that he could have done for his own cause; but then he seems to have been thinking more of the cause of truth than of his own. On the other hand, he sent a letter to a member of the council that was to determine his fate, urging that, if the matter were decided against him, he and other professors would leave the University of Jena. This letter was taken as if it had been officially addressed to the council, and it was said that Fichte had used threats, to prevent censure. This letter determined the case. A censure was passed; it was assumed that Fichte had resigned, and his resignation was accepted. And though he, afterward, sought to explain, and withdraw the resignation, the withdrawal was not permitted.

The member of the council most active against Fichte was Goethe. Our chief interest in the matter is to compare these master spirits as they stood

over against each other. Goethe would at first have saved Fichte by passing over or around the matter as easily as possible. He approached it as a diplomatist. Fichte would force the affair to its sharpest possible issue. When this was done, Goethe from being a diplomatist became the narrow official. He granted nothing to Fichte's impetuous temperament; he forced into a letter that might have been regarded as private, the significance of an official document; and left Fichte no opportunity for reconsidering or explaining his ill considered act. Fichte left Jena, and the University has never regained the position which it then lost.

The importance of this transaction, to our present purpose, is the fact of the interruption which it brought to the elaboration by Fichte of his system. Henceforth it was given to the world in fragments instead of as a complete whole.

From Jena, Fichte went to Berlin, where, later, he filled a professorship. In his "Vocation of Man,"* published in 1800, he gave what remains the best popular exposition of his system. Somewhat later, he prepared another presentation† of it, conceived in a more profound and philosophical spirit. This presentation, prepared in 1801, though it has received comparatively little attention, is one of the most important of Fichte's publications. It occupies an intermediate position between his earlier and later forms of treatment, and, more than any other

*Die Bestimmung des Menschen.
†Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre.

work, supplies that common element which is needed for the comprehension of both. This was prepared for publication. Had it been published at the time, Fichte would have been far better understood than he is. Circumstances, however, again interfered, and its publication was prevented. The next work of great philosophical importance, which Fichte published,* was his lectures on "The Way to the Blessed Life," a work which seemed to have absolutely nothing in common with his earlier philosophy, and was regarded as the beginning of a wholly new career of philosophic thought. This view the world has held to a great extent, in the face of the fact that in the preface to this work Fichte affirmed that his philosophic standpoint was unchanged.

Besides these more philosophic works, in 1805 he gave lectures on "The Nature of the Scholar,"† which were published in 1806. About the same time, he gave lectures on "The Characteristics of the Present Age,"‡ which were also published. I have compared Fichte to Carlyle. Even had the comparison not been made before, it would have been forced upon us now in naming this latter work. Never was there a more terrible arraignment of a superficial and frivolous age.

Then came the troublous times of the French war. Fichte offered his service to the government. He would accompany the soldiers, many of whom were his pupils, and inspire them by his presence

*Die Anweisung zum Seligen Leben. †Das Wesen des Gelehrten. ‡Die Grundzüge des Gegenwärtigen Zeitalters.

and his words. This service was declined. Berlin became occupied by the enemy. Fichte was a German to his heart's core, and went into voluntary banishment, that he might not be forced to give in his submission to the invader. He returned in 1807, and then gave, in Berlin, within the very sound of the tramp of the hostile soldiery, those magnificent lectures to the German people, which have endeared him to the heart of every German. In them he recognizes the meaning and the mission of the German nationality. Earlier, he had, as we have seen, exposed the hollowness of the civilization in which he lived. Now, in the darkest moment of his nation's history, he found signs of promise. He uttered to his people words of hope and cheer, while he pointed to the only ground upon which this hope could be securely based.*

Here, at last, Fichte must be considered fortunate. All his life he had been burning to influence his fellow-men. He had chosen for the medium of his utterance a system of terminology which was largely regarded as ridiculous, as well as meaningless; and the high spirit of Fichte was stung by the ridicule, and was lonely in its isolation. Now, at last, the constraint and the disguise were thrown away. He stood a man among men. He stood a leader of men. The heart of the nation thrilled at his words. A century after his birth, although his philosophy was a sealed book to many of the scholars of Germany, the German people united in a tribute to his memory.

* Reden an die Deutsche Nation.

In every way, Fichte interested himself in the national cause. His wife devoted herself to the needs of the sick and suffering soldiers. She made herself a Sister of Charity, and nursed them in the hospitals. In the midst of her labors, and on account of them, she was smitten down with a malignant fever and lay at the point of death. The term of the University was to open, and the hour for Fichte's lectures had come. He left his wife, doubtful if he should see her again in life, and went to the lecture-room whither he felt that his duty called him. When he returned, the crisis had passed and the peril was gone. Overjoyed, with a kiss he greeted his wife back to life. Doing this, he breathed in the contagion, and was prostrated by the fever, from which he did not recover.

Nothing in the life of Fichte better illustrates the two elements of his nature than this last scene of his life. To us it seems a mechanical sense of duty that led him from the bedside of his wife, whom he supposed to be dying, to his professor's chair. If, however, we are tempted to think him a mere bit of formality, the creature of mechanical routine, we remember this self-forgetting kiss of joy and love, and feel that his spirit was one of the tenderest as well as, in the phrase of Goethe, "the doughtiest that has ever lived."*

I append, for convenience of reference, the leading dates in the life of Fichte:

* Es war eine der tüchtigsten Persönlichkeiten die man je gesehen.

He was born in 1762. He became a student of Kant in 1790. He entered upon his professorship at Jena in 1794, and left it in 1799. He died at Berlin, in 1813. The period of his life in Jena is commonly reckoned as that of his earlier method in philosophy. When his whole career as a writer is considered, it is, however, divided into three periods, of which the life at Jena makes the second.

CHAPTER II.

PROBLEMS: CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO KANT.

THE reader of Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason," after toiling as best he can through analyses and abstractions, is pleasantly surprised by a picture which Kant suddenly conjures up before his imagination. It is that of an island, "The Land of Truth" (a charming name), and of the stormy and misty sea by which it is surrounded,— a sea that tempts ever to fascinating, if fruitless, adventures.* Not only had Kant, according to his just boast in this passage, explored and mapped out this island, but, if I may venture to carry out the figure a little further, upon it he had established a kingdom.

Fichte was among the first to yield enthusiastic allegiance to the new ruler. He devoted to Kant's service the full power of his maiden lance. He even assumed the place of chief lieutenant to his leader, and this, at first, not wholly without the encouragement of Kant himself. He soon found, however, that much remained to be accomplished, and that, if he would maintain the authority of his master, he must complete his work. He set himself to traverse regions that remained unexplored, to subdue unconquered or rebellious territories, to codify

* Kant's Works, Rosenkranz' Edition, II. 196.

the laws; in a word, to introduce order into the whole empire. Of course, he could not do this without bringing changes into the laws and methods of the realm. These seemed to him so essential that he adopted them without hesitation, and in good faith. To his surprise, however, his master failed to recognize his service. He even found himself declared a rebel and an outlaw. Then first did he feel himself compelled, in order to accomplish the purposes he had at heart, to set up an empire of his own.

By this illustration, I have attempted to present, in as vivid a manner as possible, the relation of Fichte to Kant. Fichte, as we have seen, resolved to devote the best years of his life to the promulgation and defence of the critical philosophy. He, however, could teach nothing that he did not absolutely understand; and defend nothing that he could not wholly believe. If he was to become the expounder of the new philosophy, this philosophy must be completely wrought over in his own mind, so that it should come forth as his own philosophy. It must be perfectly transparent and perfectly organized. It must become a unit according to his idea of unity. In accomplishing this result, all the imperfections of the system of Kant were forced upon his attention. Whether or not he may be regarded as having been successful in his attempt to complete the philosophy of Kant, at least it is true that this attempt, though made in a positive rather than in a negative sense, remains one of the

best criticisms upon the work of Kant. *Qui s'excuse s'accuse;* in like manner his effort to fortify the weak places in Kant's system reveals them. These weak places Fichte sometimes covers by a new interpretation of the teaching of Kant, which he defends, not so much by an examination of the words of the master, as by insisting that any other meaning than that which he suggests would be absurd. If his explanation does not express the real thought of Kant, it may well be understood that this is a kind of defence which no author would welcome. Sometimes he reconstructs parts of the system, of which the construction had seemed imperfect. The whole arrangement he puts upon a new basis. Thus, while undertaking, in good faith, to defend the old system, he was really founding a new. Kant must have witnessed with some surprise the growth of this new philosophy which claimed to be his own.

One great difference between the new form and the old sprang from the fresh life that was put into the system. Fichte poured into it his whole eager and impetuous soul. The work which Kant had shaped with his careful chisel, pausing only now and then to admire its fair proportions and the dignity of its bearing, has suddenly sprung into life. It is not strange that in this living and breathing form, in these features aglow with the fire of a lofty enthusiasm, Kant failed to recognize the work of his own hand. How far the work remained the same, and how far it was indeed

transformed by the process which it had undergone, we shall discover as we advance.

We have now to inquire what were some of the most important problems which, in the judgment of Fichte, Kant had left unsolved, and to which he was forced to seek an answer.

I. THE DEDUCTION OF THE CATEGORIES.

One of the most important things which remained for Fichte to accomplish, in order to give unity to the system, was the deduction of the Categories from some common principle. It has often, from the first, been urged in criticism of Kant, that he accepted the Categories, and used them without establishing them by any *a priori* reasoning, and thus without making them an organic part of his system. As is well known, he accepted, largely, the arrangement which the science of logic had made of the various forms of judgment, and formed a system of Categories corresponding to these. Whether the system of Categories were or were not complete, whether the analysis were carried as far as analysis is possible; all this was left undetermined, except so far as the accuracy of the science of logic could be trusted. Further, the question whether the table be or be not complete, is not the most important one. Accuracy of result is not sufficient for philosophy. What is demanded is transparency of process and result. The process must be seen in its necessity, and the result must thus carry the evidence of its truth within itself. The squaring of the circle, for

instance, by means of tin vessels, square and round, the liquid contents of which may be compared together, carries not one step nearer to the solution of the problem of the mathematician. The table of judgments, which Kant made the basis of his table of Categories, had been reached by a purely *a posteriori* process. Thus a crude and foreign element was introduced into the very heart of the system of Kant.

I am not sure that criticism of Kant in regard to this matter is wholly just. The fact is, of course, just as it is commonly stated. There is here in Kant's system important material taken bodily from without, and used as if it had been scientifically deduced. Whether or not, in accepting this material, Kant did not adopt the means best adapted to the end he had in view, is another question. Kant was not so much the builder up of a system, as one who cleared a space upon which a system could be reared. He was a conqueror rather than a founder. He may be regarded as the Julius Cæsar, as Hegel was the Augustus, of modern philosophy. His work was thus critical rather than constructive. It was to break up the hard and crude notions that men had of a solid, material world, wholly independent of spiritual presence, and to substitute for this the thought of an ideal world, which is for and of the spirit alone. This he could best do by taking formulas which men had been trained to regard as the most fundamental and certain, analyzing the notions which these involved, and thus showing that they

had no meaning or application beyond the mind itself. The science of logic furnished these formulas. By accepting them and analyzing them in the manner that has been indicated, Kant was carrying the war into the enemy's country, and winning a victory more substantial than could be obtained in any other way.

The criticism that has been made of Kant's method in regard to this particular should be extended, if it is legitimate, to much of his work. His method, throughout, was to proceed not from above, but from below. He did not, for instance, like Schopenhauer, attempt to deduce the forms of perception — time and space. He accepted these as he found them in the common consciousness, and sought only to show that they have no force or meaning beyond the mind itself. Passing from these to the Categories, his interest was to show that these latter are meaningless without the forms of perception, which he had before proved to be merely phenomenal. The same is true of his treatment of all the spiritual and intellectual functions. He took them as he found them.

This, then, was Kant's method. For his purposes, I am not sure that it was not the best. When the battle for idealism had been fought and won, then came the time for the deduction and organization which a constructive philosophy demands.

We can thus understand what was one of the most important and fundamental problems which Fichte undertook to solve. The attempt to deduce

from the nature of consciousness, the forms of perception, the mental faculties, and the Categories, is what, more than anything else, gives its character to his system,—it may even be said to constitute his system, and to mark the philosophical movement to which he gave, to a large degree, the impulse. Hegel is enthusiastic in his praise of the undertaking.* He speaks of the deduction as something that had not occurred to any man, from Aristotle down; and, again, he says that this was the first reasonable attempt in the world to deduce the Categories. Doubtless, in this attempt, Hegel found a challenge and a stimulus to his own great work. If, then, the success of Fichte in this undertaking was not a complete success,—and certainly the process is so bound up with his own system as to have little value outside of it,—yet the failure involved a triumph more fruitful than most victories. Fichte had pointed out the way which philosophy must take for its next advance. If it was not he who was destined to create the empire which Kant had founded, he was at least one of those who did the most to make the creation possible.

II. THE THING-IN-ITSELF.

Another point in regard to which the work of Kant needed completion, is his teaching in regard to what he called the Thing-in-itself. As is well known, according to the philosophy of Kant, all objects of sensuous perception are mere phenomena.

*In treating of Fichte in his "History of Philosophy."

The Categories of the understanding, being bound up with the forms of perception, have no use to us apart from these. Thus, the world in which we live, and all the objects and relations that constitute it, are in the mind alone. With this phenomenal world, which is in and for the mind only, Kant contrasted, or has been generally understood to contrast, *the thing* which is behind and beyond all phenomena, and which manifests its being, though not its nature, through them. This Thing-in-itself is rather assumed than taught by Kant. He takes it for granted, as something in regard to which there can be neither doubt nor discussion. This Thing-in-itself he contrasts not merely with the phenomena, but also with what, in any real and positive sense, may be called Noumenon. By the Noumenon, properly so called, he understands that which may be an object for the understanding, taken apart from any relation to perception. In his discussion of the Noumenon, he means chiefly to rebuke the use of expressions that would suggest the thought of a noumenal or intelligible world. This intelligible world, as contrasted with the sensible world, he insists has no meaning for us, and the use of phrases implying such a distinction is, he maintains, wholly vicious and misleading. In a negative sense, indeed, the Thing-in-itself may be called a Noumenon, and was so called by Kant, but in a negative sense only.* The understanding must recognize it, but must admit that the Categories have

*Kant's Works, Rosenkranz' Edition, II, 209 et 784.

no application to it. We have in the Thing-in-itself only the limit at which our thought must stop. This Thing-in-itself, shut out from the realm of phenomena, and not fairly admitted into that of noumena, may well be said, in the phrase of Hegel, to hover like a pale ghost outside the system of Kant.

When we look at the matter more closely, we see that the whole account of this foreign element is illogical, and the assumption of it without ground. This has been, indeed, one of the earliest and most often repeated, as it is one of the most obvious, criticisms of the system of Kant. If the Categories, it is said, do not apply to it, how do we reach any idea of its existence? If it does not stand related to the world of phenomena, either as substance or cause, what is the relation in which it stands to it? The very word Relation expresses a Category. Relation in general, as well as any particular relation, is, according to Kant, for and of the mind alone. The Thing-in-itself can be considered to stand, then, in absolutely no relation to the phenomenon. If it stood in any relation to it, it would thereby become embraced in our system of Categories, from which it has been absolutely excluded. What leads us then to assume the existence, outside the mind, of something that has absolutely no relation to anything that is in the mind? It is assumed as a point of unity for the perception, as the I is assumed as the principle of unity in thought. But the term Unity itself designates one of these omni-

present Categories. Kant, then, would seem to have preserved this bit of natural realism in his system, and to have uttered it with a *naïve* unconsciousness as something so much a matter of course as to require neither thought nor justification.

In all this, however, Fichte maintains that Kant has been wholly misunderstood. He maintains that by the Thing-in-itself, Kant meant nothing *extra mentem;* that he meant merely the unity and absolute objectivity which the mind gives in perception to its own creations. The difficulty of using any term in regard to this matter, that may be absolutely free from any ambiguity, may make the interpretation given by Fichte seem less extravagant than it might at first sight appear. The terms Objects and Objective are often used under the impression that they express something wholly foreign to the mind. The terms Subjective and Objective are often used as if they meant the same as Inner and Outer. But the Object implies the Subject, and thus may be considered as wholly bound up with it. That the Object need not be considered as foreign to the Subject may be seen from the fact that in consciousness the self is objective to itself. Thus the term Object, however strongly emphasized, does not necessarily — strictly speaking, it does not possibly — take us beyond the limits of the mind. Even the term Thing-in-itself, though apparently invented for this very purpose, does not take us necessarily beyond the mind; for, if there is no other world than the mental world, then the Thing-in-

itself will have its being in this. If our ultimate fact be sensation, the Thing-in-itself will be sensation; if it be thought, the Thing-in-itself will be thought; if it be spirit, the Thing-in-itself will be spirit. No form of speech occurs to me as being wholly unambiguous in this connection, except that which I have used in this discussion. The words *In mente* and *Extra mentem*, or their equivalents, seem free from any possible ambiguity. Kant, however, did not use these words, and thus there is always space for discussion as to his real meaning.

Fichte defends his view of Kant's system by appealing to this ambiguity. He affirms that so long as Kant does not expressly say that, in philosophy, sensation must be explained by a transcendental object, which is external to us, so long he will not believe that Kant had the view that is so often ascribed to him. He adds that if Kant ever does make such a statement, he shall consider the "Critique of Pure Reason" to be rather a work of the strangest chance than of a mind.*

The fact remained, however, that the "Kantians" not only understood Kant to take the position which Fichte regarded as so absurd, but also that they frankly accepted it at his hands. They held Kant's view of the Categories, of their inapplicability be-

*Sämmtliche Werke, I, 486. The term Transcendental, which must not be confounded with Transcendent, is here used to indicate the contradictory nature of the view described. The object is transcendental, because it is assumed as a necessity of thought; yet it is further assumed to be external. It cannot, Fichte would say, be both, and this is what makes the view ascribed to Kant so absurd.

yond the mind, and of the Thing-in-itself that was held to be beyond their reach though really it was simply an embodiment of them. This fact was urged against Fichte: You say that no mind can hold a position so self-contradictory; but here you have, before you, minds that really do hold this position; consequently, you have no right to interpret Kant's writings by any argument based upon such a theoretical impossibility. To this, Fichte replied in effect, that we must distinguish between the minds that accept a system at second hand, and the mind that originally thought it out. Many an inconsequence could be accepted by the former that would be impossible to the latter. The man who had first framed a system, who had himself explored all its relations, who had logically developed it from its inception, must hold it as a unity. He must be able to think of it as a whole. He could not thus fail to be sensible to any self-contradiction so obvious as that under consideration; while those who had accepted the system from without might hold it mechanically, with no sense of this living unity, and thus might naturally be less sensitive to any contradiction existing in the system as they held it. If a boy repeats by rote, or with a partial comprehension, a mathematical demonstration, we are not surprised at any confusion that may exist among the figures. Such a confusion existing, undetected, in the work of the master who originated the demonstration would surprise us.

If, however, we accept the commonly received

interpretation of Kant's language in regard to the Thing-in-itself, and at the same time see the contradiction which this interpretation introduces into his work, how can we meet the difficulty that is urged by Fichte? How can we suppose it possible for a master who has wrought out the idealistic philosophy, as we find it embodied in Kant's Critique, to admit into his view of things such a wholly foreign and irreconcilable element? Would it seem too bold to suggest that this result may have been more easy because Kant received the fundamental position of his system from without? It was Hume who reached the conception of a purely idealistic view of the universe. It was he who considered the processes of the mind as complete in themselves; in whose system we find no hint of any influence from the world outside the mind, nor any hint of a permanent *ego* behind the mind. This was with him an original thought, and the clearness of its utterance satisfies entirely the claim that Fichte makes for such originality. But Hume by the use of the word, impression, to represent the more vivid perceptions of the mind, prepared a dangerous pitfall for those who should come after him. He posted, it is true, a warning as distinctly and conspicuously as seemed necessary, by stating in a note that he uses the term Impression not to express the manner in which our lively perceptions are produced, but merely the perceptions themselves.* In spite of this warning, many students of Hume, who might have been supposed to

* Hume's Philosophical Works, I, 16.

keep a better watch over their steps, have stumbled and fallen into the pitfall. Can it be that Kant himself is of the number? With such questions, and even with the interpretation of Kant's statements in regard to the Thing-in-itself, we have here nothing to do. Our business is simply to emphasize the fact that here is a portion of Kant's work that needs completion.

It may help us to follow with a clear understanding the reasoning of Fichte, to ask, in advance, in what ways it is possible to complete the thought of the Thing-in-itself, while remaining wholly within the sphere of Kant's system. In other words, we have to ask what methods of treatment recognized by Kant may be applied to it, or into what classifications adopted by him it may be introduced. It is obvious that there are in the system of Kant two methods of procedure, either of which may be employed. By this, I affirm simply the formal possibility of such procedure; whether either method would be found practicable, is a question that is not here raised. Two classes of beings are recognized by Kant. The first class includes phenomenal existences,— those which exist in the mind itself. We have, here, the whole objective world in the strict sense of this term. We have the Objects of perception filled out and bound together by the Categories of the understanding. These Objects are given directly in consciousness. The Thing-in-itself could be put into the same division with them. It could be regarded as a product of the Categories,

embodying them, and placed, by the mind, behind the objects of its creation to give them unity, solidity, and permanence. In other words, instead of placing the Thing-in-itself outside the mind, it would be inclosed within the mind; the Categories of the understanding being stretched so as to receive it.

Over against the phenomenal existences, here described, is the Absolute Being, or, God. Those are the product of the intellectual or theoretical powers; this is a postulate of the practical reason. It is reached only by an act of faith. Its reality is postulated, not proved. We cannot say that it is; we can only say that it must be. It would be at least formally possible to look upon the Thing-in-itself, from a similar point of view, to accept it as real, but to regard it also as a postulate, as something held by a practical necessity, without logical grounds, and without comprehension.

Either of these methods could be followed without introducing any new element into the system of Kant. Any fundamentally different method would take us out of the sphere of Kant's philosophy. Whether Fichte adopted either of these methods, whether he did not incline to both, as he looked at the matter in one aspect or another, and how true he remained to the Kantian tradition, we shall see as we advance.

III. PROBLEMS SUGGESTED BY THE PRACTICAL REASON.

A third very important problem, or group of problems, is suggested by the work of Kant. His

system culminates in the thought of the moral law, of freedom, of God, and of immortality. These are recognized as standing in a profound and intimate relation to one another. Man's freedom finds its scope and its evidence in morality. The moral law finds its scope and its reality in human freedom. The being of God is a postulate of the moral law, which would be idle and fruitless without it. The idea of God is thus practically the product of the moral law, and includes nothing that is not suggested by it. Immortality is also a postulate of the moral law.

The statements that Kant makes, in regard to the relation of God and immortality to the moral law, are not wholly free from contradiction. His first account of the matter is given near the close of the "Critique of Pure Reason." It is here treated under the special head, "What shall I hope?" and under the more general head, "The Ideal of the Highest Good." Two elements are recognized as constituting the highest good. One of these elements is righteousness; the other is happiness. In the idea of the highest good, these, we are told, stand to one another in a definite relation; happiness is exactly proportioned to desert. This relation between obedience to duty and happiness Kant maintains to be fundamental. Indeed duty would, he affirms, be powerless, if we had no reason to believe that happiness would follow from its accomplishment. Duty, indeed, should always be the prime motive of our acts; but this motive would

not be sufficient of itself to move us. If, then, happiness is to be made proportionate to desert, we must postulate a power that can accomplish this; and a sphere in which it can be accomplished. The power that we thus postulate is God, and the sphere is the immortal life.

In this whole statement, the relation is made purely personal. We have the individual requiring to be assured that his virtue will be crowned with happiness. This is not, indeed, because he demands a reward; but because virtue would necessarily be regarded as a phantom of the brain, unless there were united with it that happiness which we recognize as its necessary result. "Therefore, everyone regards the moral laws as commands; which they could not be, if they did not connect with their requirements results having an *a priori* adaptation to them, and thus if they did not bring with themselves promises and threats." * It is thus obvious that what was here in the mind of Kant was something of the nature of rewards and punishments. God is regarded as the power that represents the moral law, and applies its sanctions. These sanctions must not be supposed to be arbitrarily affixed to the law; they are bound up with the very idea of it. On the other hand, the law is not self-executing. It is not sufficient even to secure obedience, unless these rewards and punishments are associated with it. Perhaps we might say that the meaning is, that the law could not secure allegiance

* Kant's Werke, Rosenkranz' Edition, II, 235.

unless it could show that it is actually supreme in the universe. Still it must be remembered that, as before remarked, the question, "What shall I hope?" is here supreme; and the rewards and threatenings have to do with the well being of the individual himself.

Later, he treats the same subject more fully in his "Critique of the Practical Reason." * The general view in this later exposition is the same as that in the earlier; except that here the personal element is kept much more in the background. Kant evidently feels the delicacy of the position more keenly than he did before. He sees that anything like threatenings and rewards is wholly out of place in his system of morality, which demands the right for the sake of the right alone.

In the later treatment, the postulates of immortality and the being of God are separated, each being put upon an independent footing. Immortality is postulated, not that obedience to the moral law shall be rewarded; but in order that this law itself shall have free scope; not for the sake of happiness, but for the sake of virtue. The moral law, Kant tells us in effect, is infinite. At no moment can the perfect holiness which it requires be attained. Eternity, therefore, must be postulated if the moral law is to be obeyed. An eternal progress is the only form under which obedience to it can be possible.

It might appear doubtful, at first sight, whether

* Kant's Werke, Rosenkranz' Edition, VIII, 261.

we have here a contradiction or a difference of emphasis. I am inclined to think, however, that, in this case, a difference of emphasis is a contradiction. Each view is given in its place as the explanation and ground of the postulate. Either of these views may furnish the basis for belief in immortality; or both of them, taken in relation to one another, may do this; but it is impossible that each of them should independently, and at the same time, furnish this basis.

The thought of the necessary apportionment of happiness to desert, which in the earlier treatment is made the occasion of postulating both God and immortality, is, in the later statement, made to furnish the ground for postulating the existence of God alone. But even here, the point of view is essentially changed. Before, the thought of personal happiness was prominent, if, indeed, the thought of the happiness of others entered at all into the discussion. The question was squarely asked: If I so conduct as to be not unworthy of happiness, shall I obtain happiness? In the later treatment, the proportioning of happiness to desert is made the general end toward which a moral being must work. The accomplishing of the result is, however, far beyond the powers of any finite being. We must postulate, then, the existence of an infinite Being, by whom the result aimed at shall be accomplished. My happiness, should I deserve happiness, is indeed bound up with the general happiness. It is an item in the mass. It is not,

however, this fact that determines my activity. I am working for a general result, to which this is only incidental.

It will be noticed that we have, in this second statement, two complemental postulates, one of which insists upon what is needed by the individual in order that obedience to the law shall be possible to him, while the other refers to the difficulty of accomplishment that is inherent in the law itself. I must have scope for that infinite progress by which alone my obedience is possible; and there must also be a power that shall make possible the result which the law demands. The personal element which in the earlier statement was supreme, is in this later statement hardly appreciable.

This change in the position of Kant is interesting as illustrating the fact that Kant was seeking reasons to justify his postulates rather than basing his postulates on principles that were seen to demand them. The statement that the hope of individual happiness is essential to virtue, is thrown aside, but the result that had been based on this, remains, and another foundation is sought for it. The most general statement of the principle, it is true, remains; namely, that we are saved by hope. In the one case, however, the hope is personal; in the other, it is impersonal. This shows simply that Kant was, from the first, confident that the relation between morality and religion is a necessary one.

All this has been dwelt upon to illustrate the fact that Kant in all this matter left problems to be

solved. The relation to one another of all the elements that enter into the discussion, as it is left by him, is arbitrary and superficial. The relation of God to the moral law is wholly external. God is assumed merely as the arbiter of destiny. The relation of the moral law to human nature, and thus to human freedom, is unexplained. Further, it is assumed, as a matter too obvious to require discussion, that it is impossible for any finite being to attain to perfect holiness. No ground is given for this assumption. Finally, the relation of holiness to happiness is left entirely obscure. The two stand over against one another, as elements wholly foreign, to be united only by some external power.

All the problems here suggested are made the objects of careful study by Fichte, and a clear perception of them will be found to be a great help in the comprehension of the deeper thought of his system. From the very first, he evidently felt that much was to be done in the way of filling out the system of Kant at the points here indicated. In his earliest contribution to the Kantian philosophy, the work that was written while he was the most closely under the personal influence of Kant and which was published in a certain sense under Kant's patronage, he attacks some of these problems. He attempts to fill out, by the delicate tracery in which he was skilled, some of the gaps left by the massive masonry of Kant. He here attempts to show some relation between morality and happiness. He shows a profound view of this relationship even by a change

in the term employed. He speaks of blessedness rather than of happiness. Thus, at the very beginning of his philosophic career, he is already busied by considering the "Way to the Blessed Life." He also endeavors to represent the various relations in which God may be supposed to stand to the moral law. All of this treatment is, when compared with Fichte's later work, entirely superficial. It illustrates, however, the fundamental nature of his interest in philosophy, by showing the nature of the problems that first forced themselves upon him. Even while he was busied with more superficial matters, while he was working out the first presentation of his system, the short statement in regard to the Worth of Man shows that these more profound problems were those toward which his speculation was really pressing, and it is these that furnish the substance of his later thought.

IV. UNITY IN GENERAL.

We have seen that Kant, in each of the spheres of thought, leaves certain elements not incorporated into the unity of a system. The Thing-in-itself stands outside, with no apparent relation to any part of his philosophy. The Categories and all forms of intellectual activity are accepted without being made to appear to have any organic relation to one another. The elements that enter into the higher moral life stand also disconnected. Each of these spheres thus lacks unity. Still more glaring does this lack of unity become, when we attempt to com-

bine these various spheres into any absolute relation. The moral world and the intellectual world stand over against one another as though they belong to different universes.

The fact as last stated was obvious to Kant himself. In his introduction to the "Critique of the Faculty of Judgment," Kant recognizes these distinct realms. One is theoretical; the other is practical. One has for its governing principle the Understanding; the other, the Reason. He recognizes the fact that here is opened an unbounded, but also an inaccessible field for knowledge. The two realms stand over against each other as if they were so many different worlds. The one is the world of the sensuous, or the natural; the other is the world of the supersensuous or the supernatural. Of these, the first can have no influence upon the second; the second, however, should have an influence upon the first. The idea of moral freedom should make the end toward which the practical reason points, actual in the world of the senses. In this case, it must be possible to regard nature in such a way that its laws are fitted to coöperate with those of moral freedom, and to work for the same end. There must, therefore, be a principle of unity by which the natural and supernatural are made one. The supersensuous principle which underlies nature, and the supersensuous principle which underlies the realm of freedom must have some common ground. This common ground cannot be reached either by the understand-

ing or the reason, but it must make possible a passage from the one realm of thought to the other.

Fichte refers to this passage as the most significant part of this very significant book.* In examining it and the principles to which it refers, he insists that in Kant's system there are three absolutes. The first of these is the sensuous experience, which includes the whole sensuous world, so far as this is recognized by Kant. This is the realm of the understanding. The second absolute is the moral world, the world of the reason. The third is the principle which Kant recognizes as the common ground of both. Though it is the common ground, yet it cannot be seen as such; we cannot bring into a single thought the two absolutes first named as springing from it. If I am to recognize it at all, I must recognize it as a third absolute.

Fichte states expressly that the statement of Kant which we are here considering was the historical point from which his own independent speculation started. This statement by Fichte is a very important contribution to our knowledge of the development of his system. We might have assumed the fact to be as he asserts it; but it is none the less interesting to find him consciously recognizing this definite relation to the system of Kant, pointing us to the very sentence that roused his intellectual activity to its real work. This statement of Fichte furnishes, as we shall see, the key to his system. It literally describes the problem which he set himself

* Nachgelassene Werke, II, 103.

to solve. This problem is the reduction of the theoretic reason and the practical reason to a common principle. This result involves all the others that have been named. It involves, on the one side, the unity of the theoretical processes, and thus the deduction of the Categories and the rest; and, on the other, the recognition of the nature of the object of sensuous perception, the Thing-in-itself. It involves the introduction of a similar unity into the world of the practical reason, and finally it involves what is indeed, as we have seen, the gist of the problem, the reduction of the world of the Understanding and that of the Reason to a common principle.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROBLEMS CONSIDERED IN THEMSELVES.

WE have thus examined the principal problems with which the philosophy of Fichte has to do, so far as they are suggested by the system of Kant. Of these problems, the first — that of the deduction of the Categories — may be regarded as affecting the form of the system; though it must be remembered that in philosophy the form is also in part identical with the material. The others concern the material of the system and, indeed, the most fundamental and important elements of the material.

However interesting it may be to trace the growth of one system out of another, to see how the later is involved in the earlier, and how the thought of humanity develops as if it were the thought of an individual, such considerations affect chiefly the student of the history of philosophy. The interest is largely technical. A more important question, then, than that of the relation of Fichte to Kant is that of the significance of the problems considered in themselves. Indeed, the study of the history of philosophy fails of its true end when it is pursued merely as a matter of historical or curious interest. One might as well watch the changing

forms in the kaleidoscope, or the shifting shadows of interlacing branches, as to study the changing forms of human thought, considered simply as changing forms. For one who feels no need of an answer to the questions with which a system of philosophy deals, that system has no significance. We have now, therefore, to ask what is the permanent human interest which is involved in the problems which Fichte undertakes to solve.

We shall here consider these under their most general form, thereby reducing them to two, namely: The place of the *a priori* method in philosophy, and the nature of the Ultimate Reality. My intention is not at all to discuss these problems, but merely to make it appear as clearly as possible that we have in them problems that deserve to be discussed.

I. THE *A PRIORI* METHOD IN PHILOSOPHY.

The deduction of the Categories is a part of the general scheme of philosophy which Fichte held, and which he impressed upon the minds of his immediate successors. His idea was that a philosophy should be a system deduced from a single principle. It should thus possess an organic unity, and this unity should be the result of *a priori* reasoning. This constructive method is that which properly receives the name Speculative. Now this whole form of procedure is totally at variance with the methods most prized at present. The reliance of the present thought of the world is

placed almost wholly upon induction. The systems that have been constructed according to the deductive method seem to many, at the present day, no more substantial than air castles.

Various grave objections are urged against the speculative method of thought. It is urged that we cannot reach, thereby, concrete realities. These must in every case be given. When the philosopher seems to have reached by his deduction anything of a nature at all concrete, let it be even the Faculties of the Mind or the Categories of Thought, these are in fact accepted by him as given. They are really the products of experience. Further, it is urged that no real unity is attained by this process, but only the semblance of unity. We have a generalization and classification; but we have just as many units as before. Still further, it is urged that the process of deduction is arbitrary. Not only are the so-called results given in advance, by experience, but the philosopher so frames and guides his reasoning as to reach these points already given; and thus, it is urged finally, the whole process is idle and delusive.

We must admit the charges thus urged to be in some respects well grounded. At the same time we must insist that the speculative method in philosophy has great claims to a respectful consideration. We here leave out of the account all discussion of the results actually reached by this method. Fichte's attempt we have yet to study, and that of no other concerns us. We have

to look upon this method largely as if it were yet untried; or, at least, to consider its accomplishments only in the most general and abstract way.

It must be admitted that speculative philosophy can never, by itself, reach concrete results; yet it accomplishes very much, if it have a place for these, if it show that the concrete fact represents some general principle or some moment in a process that by itself considered is purely formal. If it cannot construct in advance the content of experience, it is much if it can explain empirical results, when they are given. To take a very crude and inadequate example, the philosophy of history could not construct, in advance, the personalities, say, of Huss or Luther; it does much, if it can explain the relation of things which made a movement like that represented by Huss or Luther inevitable. A better example may be found in the applied mathematics. Take, for instance, the science of optics. As Mill insists, no reasoning can explain why any special form of undulation should produce upon us the definite sensation which in fact we find to correspond to it. This may illustrate the impotence of mathematics in general to account for the precise empirical result of any process. Yet none the less does the science of mathematics do a work of incalculable importance by giving a scheme, all the parts of which stand in a definite and necessary relation to all the rest; a scheme in which all these empirical elements have their place.

Fichte assigns precisely this work to speculative

philosophy. He recognizes two classes of objects which cannot be deduced; namely, the irrational and the concrete. He says: How the accidental, the chance, or lawless, comes to pass cannot be told. Foolish people demand that we shall deduce, for them, their pens and the foolishness which they write. There is, however, no reason even for their own existence. Just as little can be deduced even that which stands under a law, that which is, in the strictest sense of the word, real. This is found only in empirical knowledge; and the science of knowledge, or philosophy, can only indicate its place — the vacancy which it fills, but by no means the content of this.*

While the work of speculative philosophy is thus somewhat similar to that of applied mathematics, it is, so far as it can be accomplished, more important than this. This greater importance arises from two of its characteristics. In the first place, philosophy is more inclusive than mathematics, having, in fact, to do with all that is. In the second place, for this very reason its results are more complete, and thus more transparent, than those of mathematics. This latter has to do with sensible elements which admit of no solution. The moments of a speculative philosophy are more closely allied with the processes of thought, and are more easily perceived to be merely the nodes in a movement of spontaneous development.

The arbitrariness which is found in philosophy

*Nachgelassene Werke, II, 318.

has also its counterpart in mathematics. This, also, out of many possible lines of movement, chooses that which will lead to a given point. In philosophy, often, a given course of reasoning can be with difficulty understood till we have looked forward and seen the point to which it is aiming. When we have seen this, then we can understand the turns of thought which are leading toward it. But the same is true in regard to the most solid scientific processes. "Tell me," said Faraday to Tyndall, who was about to show him an experiment, "Tell me what I am to look for."

It must be admitted that there are difficulties in the way of a speculative philosophy that no mathematical process has to meet. There are difficulties in finding the proper starting point. There are difficulties arising from the largeness and apparent vagueness of the elements and relations employed. There is possible an arbitrariness of treatment. The results reached bear witness to the narrowness or the prepossessions of the philosopher himself. Fichte deduces the position which woman holds in the family, according to the German notion, as confidently as he deduces any more fundamental and universal relation.* A Frenchman or an American might have reached, with the same confidence, quite different results. The difficulty of an undertaking does not, however, prove its impossibility. Least of all does it prove its worthlessness. If the science of mathematics has contributed anything to our knowl-

* Rechtslehre: Sämmtliche Werke, III, 325.

edge of the phenomena to which it can be applied, so that the scientist does not feel that he understands them till he has subjected them to mathematical formulas; still more must speculative philosophy, supposing it to be in any degree attainable, contribute to our thought of the larger realities with which it has to do.

What has been said suggests the kind of unity which philosophy may reach. It may at least reach the unity of the Idea. Thought, like spirit, involves in its very nature the coëxistence, even the identification, of two elements that under all other forms are mutually exclusive; namely, Unity and Diversity. So far as the real may be regarded as the ideal, so far may it be regarded under the form of unity; and, since it is the nature of the mind to think, it cannot rest till it represents to itself all things under the form of thought; that is, till the real has become the ideal.

I repeat that we are not here concerned to prove that a philosophy such as has been indicated is possible, or to show how far it is possible. All that is here insisted on is that only so far as it is possible can we have any satisfactory thought of our own spirits or of the universe in which we live. This consideration may make us, at least, regard the attempt to reach such a philosophy as an important one. It may prepare us to follow with interest the attempt which Fichte makes to formulate such a system. We must remember, however, that no failures can prove that the undertaking itself attempts the

impossible. We must remember that each attempt, although in part a failure, may be, at the same time, in part successful; and, at least, that every such attempt, though it may itself not fully succeed, may do something to make possible the final accomplishment.

II. THE ULTIMATE REALITY.

The real question that philosophy has to answer is this: What really *is?* Fichte recognized this as the problem with which philosophy has to deal.* This question seems to common thought a very easy one. What is? We are, the world is, and all the persons and objects near and remote that make up the physical universe — these are. Perhaps there may be added to the list, with more or less confidence, spiritual beings. God may be recognized as being. Many would, however, make this last and grandest thought dependent upon those which were named before. To most the external universe is the most certain of realities.

A slight observation does something to disturb the completeness of the notion of the outward universe. Perhaps to few is it wholly rounded and complete. Among the first elements to be transferred from the outer to the inner world are heat and cold. We learn that a body which we call hot

*In my judgment, the question which philosophy has to answer is the following: What relation is there between our notions and their objects? How far can it be said that anything outside of us * * * answers to them?—Sämmtliche Werke, II, 435 and 440.

simply heats. What we call heat is simply our sensation. Perhaps the next element to be surrendered is sound. I think that nothing contributes more to the first disturbance of our confidence in the reality of the world about us, than the first noticing that one hears the sound of the distant woodsman's axe, while the axe is rising. This disassociation of elements that seemed inseparable, affects us something as does an occasional tremor in the scenery of the stage. The illusion is for the moment broken. A closer analysis brings to view the fact that light and color are sensations of our own, and thus can, as such, have no external existence. An illustration has been suggested that makes all this very clear. Suppose an indestructible rod in a dark room to be made to vibrate, at first slowly, but with ever increasing rapidity. At first we should feel, if we were near enough, some disturbance of the air. Then we should hear a sound, first low and then continually higher. Then we should have a sense of warmth, if we were near enough; then of heat. Finally, we should see successive colors of the spectrum. These phenomena would not manifest themselves continuously; there would be intervals in which no one of them would be produced. This illustrates very well the fact that all the sensations which have been referred to, and which seem qualitatively distinct, are merely marks by which we check off difference in quantity. In other words, the changes in the rapidity of vibrations or undulations outside of us excite these varied forms of sensation within.

We thus rest in the thought of the undulations as something final. But what are these undulations? Is not our idea of them made up of what we have seen or felt? These undulations are made up of sensations of our own, which we have combined and projected into the external world. The older school of English and Scotch philosophy made a distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of objects. The former, such as extension and solidity, were said to belong to the objects; the latter, like color, are the effects produced within our own sensations. Sir William Hamilton insists upon this distinction. He maintains that we must apply to consciousness the principle of evidence: *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*;* and that if the testimony of consciousness is broken in regard to these primary qualities of matter, its testimony is good for nothing. He forgets that the testimony of consciousness, or what he calls such, is already proved false by the recognition of the fact of the subjectivity of color and sound. Even the primary qualities of matter have, however, no meaning to us apart from sensation.

It would here be out of place to detail the methods by which the notion or the form of space is produced within us. There, is, however, no resting place between the position of Kant on the one side, that space is simply a subjective form of perception, originally belonging to the mind itself, and the results of our physiological psychologists on the

* Discussions (London), 86.

other, who make it out to be the result of continued sensations to which we lend the form of externality. In either case it is of the mind alone.

Indeed, theoretically, the present age can make little objection to the results above stated. Physiology has proved the phenomenal character of the elements that make up the world of objects, in the midst of which we seem to live. It does not always remember that, thereby, it has taken the solid basis from beneath its own feet. It attempts to construct mental out of physical processes, feeling that thereby it has sufficiently explained them. It does not always keep in mind that the physical facts upon which it bases its reasoning, are themselves a part of the phenomenal world; that is, that they are products of the mind itself. Herbert Spencer shows how absolutely nothing we know of the real things about us, by pointing out that they are at one end of the nerves, while our sensations are produced at the other.* The argument loses nothing in force, although its own basis is swept away by it; for the nerves themselves belong to that phenomenal world of which they prove our ignorance. Herbert Spencer properly denies that he is a materialist. The reality which he recognizes is something which lies back of the distinction of matter and mind, and manifests itself in both. He insists that the relations of which he speaks may be expressed equally well in terms of mind or in those of matter, according to the point from which

* Spencer's Psychology, I, 207.

we start.* He seems to forget for the moment that we have only terms that are derived from mental processes, and that we always start from the mind, which, indeed, we can never get beyond.

If, however, we grant that the world of visible and tangible objects is one of appearances, must we not recognize the fact that there is a world of reality beyond this, which manifests its existence by means of these appearances? Must we not insist, with Kant, upon the Thing-in-itself, apart from the phenomenon? Does not this reveal itself by the opposition which meets us at every point? I press my hand against a wall, and I feel the opposing pressure. Even though the wall, as I picture it to myself, may be a creation of my internal senses, is not the resistance at least real? But, replies Fichte, in effect, What is your hand, and how do you know that you have a hand? The hand and the wall belong alike to the world of appearances.†

What do you mean, he urges further, by this reality behind the appearance? Do you not mean something that could be discerned by other senses if we had them, or by other intelligences if there are such? Thus, is not the something behind the appearance merely the possibility of another world of possible sensations? or, putting the matter in another light, is not what we mean, solidity? The appearance seems to us superficial, it has to do with surfaces; but behind these there is the solid

* Spencer's First Principles, 503.

† Bestimmung des Menschen, Sämmtliche Werke, II, 207-211.

reality. What do we mean by this, he asks, in effect, but that we should, could we examine, find ever new surfaces, the process of infinite divisibility being only the possibility of an infinitude of surfaces? Thus, from whatever point we start, we find it impossible to get beyond the world of mental feelings and processes. It is impossible, because we cannot get out of ourselves. We can use no terms but mental terms; thus it is impossible to state precisely what we mean by the something real outside the mind.

It is equally impossible to prove the existence of such a reality, let us speak of it by what abstract or inadequate terms we may. John Stuart Mill, indeed, maintained that the existence of one kind of being outside ourselves can be proved; namely, that of conscious personalities like our own.* It is true that the evidence of an *extra mentem* subject-object can be conceived more easily than that of a mere object. We can use words in regard to it that have a positive meaning. It is, however, as impossible to prove the existence of the one as that of the other. The argument of Mill is substantially as follows: In our consciousness we find certain groups of sensations, each of which remains substantially the same, subject only to slight variations. One of these groups we learn to regard as representing ourself. We call it our body. This is subjected to some change, and responds to this by

* Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, I, Chapter XII.

other changes. In our own case, between the antecedent and the consequent is a mean term; namely, consciousness. It is indeed a series of terms; namely, feeling, thought, will. Other groups closely resemble this. We notice like antecedents and like consequents. We assume that the mean term also exists.

In this discussion, his purpose is negative rather than positive — to maintain that the knowledge of such existences is not intuitive, rather than that it can be supported by absolute proof; yet he appears to assume that we have here a case of real and convincing induction. This reasoning he compares to that by which Newton proved that the force which keeps the planets in their place is identical with that by which an apple falls to the ground.

When we examine the argument, however, we find that it is evidently not at all a case of induction, but one of analogy. We reason from what accompanies the changes in one set of phenomena, to that which must accompany the resembling changes in innumerable other groups of phenomena. It is precisely as when we reason from the fact that this world is inhabited, to the belief that other worlds are inhabited.

It differs in another respect from the reasoning of Newton above referred to. In that, the force proved to exist was completely defined in the terms of its effect. A relation was shown to prevail wherever solid bodies exist. One might have begun with the motion of the moon, and reasoned to that of the apple, as well as the reverse. In the

case before us, these conditions do not exist. In this, an element is found to exist between the cause and effect, which is something more than a mean between the two. It is a complicated process, having relations of its own; and is so distinct from the terms which it unites, that Huxley and others can claim that it could be dropped out without affecting the result.

Analogy, however, when it is perfect, may produce a conviction as strong as can be produced by induction; and the resemblance in this case may, at first sight, seem so very perfect as to make the reasoning that is based upon it wholly convincing. There is, however, one great point of weakness which vitiates the whole argument. In the case from which we reason, it is the changes in our own consciousness that manifest themselves to our consciousness. We have a complete circle. Nothing is present that involves elements which are, in any strict sense, outside of our own minds. The result to which the argument leads, on the contrary, is the belief in something wholly outside our own mind; namely, the belief in lines of consciousness wholly foreign to our own. When we recognize, on the one side, the solitariness of the fact from which we reason, and, on the other, the vast number of the facts to which we apply our reasoning; and when we consider further the great flaw that has been shown to exist in the argument itself, we cannot attach much value to it.

We need not, however, spend much time in these *a priori* considerations. We have a practical test of

the argument, that shows how little confidence can be placed in it. In dreams, the position is precisely that upon which the argument is based; but we know that in dreams the argument is wholly deceptive. We assume that the changing groups of phenomena represent personalities like our own. When we wake, we pronounce this to be a delusion. If the analogy deceives us at one time, it may at another. If the mind at one time may give an apparently distinct life to creations of its own, why may it not at another? I know that it will be said that dreams are fictitious reproductions of what has really presented itself to our waking consciousness. This, however, is simply to assume the whole question. So far as the argument is concerned, we might as well reason the other way; namely, that the experiences of our waking moments are the reproductions of the realities presented to our dreams.

A stronger way of putting the argument would be to base it neither upon induction nor upon analogy, but upon the fact that the assumption of personalities outside ourselves is a hypothesis that has always worked well. It has really met the facts of the case. This argument is not conclusive, as may be seen from the old astronomical theories of cycles and epicycles. The hypothesis worked well, but it introduced cumbersome elements which were needed to help it out. Might it not be said that the assumption of myriads of things outside ourselves introduces a machinery far more complicated than that

beneath which the astronomical hypothesis gave way; while the opposing theory, which makes all these forms that fill our consciousness, the creation of our consciousness itself, has the advantage of extreme simplicity. The test from dreams, however, disposes of the form of the argument which is based upon the successful working of a hypothesis, as it did of the other.

It is not improbable that the facts recognized by the arguments thus considered may represent the method by which we really arrived at the belief of existences outside our own mind. It might even be applied to things as well as to persons. The consciousness that accompanies the group of phenomena representing what we call our own body, shows that this group has something behind it or connected with it; and something similar to this we ascribe to all similar groups. In all these cases, this *something* is consciousness. We may abstract, however, from the consciousness, and leave only a vague *somewhat;* and may thus reach the thought of unconscious things outside our own mind. Schopenhauer did something of this kind. He properly called the reasoning analogy.* He found within himself, deeper than consciousness, the will. This he assumed to be the reality of our nature; and behind all groups of phenomena he put either a conscious or an unconscious will. Though this may represent more or less correctly the process which the mind

* Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, I, 125.

has actually followed, the examination above given shows that as reasoning it is wholly unsound.

All that remains, then, would seem to be to say with Herbert Spencer, that the belief in a reality outside ourselves is something absolute and final; that it can neither be proved nor disproved;* for either proof or disproof would involve the idea of something which we believe more strongly than we do the fact of external existence, whereas this latter belief is stronger than any other. The phenomena of dreams would not disturb this position, for we have to do with no fact except that of belief. We cannot help believing in our dreams while they last; we cannot help believing in our waking experiences while they last. All this, however, even though it should prove to be the final statement of the case, is extremely unsatisfactory from a philosophical point of view. We may indeed question, with some show of reason at least, the absolute certainty of the assumption that the belief in outward existence is so immovably fixed in the mind. We must recognize the fact that there are two kinds of belief, each real in its way: the one is an intellectual assent to a proposition which is supported by irresistible arguments; the other is that belief which we can make real to ourselves, of which we have, in the common phrase, a realizing sense. An example of the former, or purely intellectual, belief, is the assurance with which we accept the truth that sound and color are purely subjective experiences. We know that

*Spencer's Psychology, II, 452.

the tree is not green and that the rose is not red, in the only sense in which the terms green and red have any meaning to us; but of this we have no realizing sense — indeed, we cannot make it real to us. We know, too, that the earth is round, and that it circles about the sun; this belief also, is, to most men, purely intellectual; it does not represent anything that is real to them. So it may not be impossible that one might, in the same intellectual way, prove to himself the non-existence of beings outside of himself, while he holds this belief in the same unreal way in which we hold the belief in the colorlessness and soundlessness of the external world.

However this may be, the position itself is one that offers a challenge to philosophic thought. This external reality is a crude fact which demands solution. It is not, like the existence of ourselves, absolutely given in consciousness. It is simply assumed by consciousness. The matter is not merely one of theoretical interest. We are moulded, we are told, by our environment. Now, here we have a real environment which hems us in on every side; which we assume; but of which we can confessedly know absolutely nothing. Now, if we could reach to any knowledge of this, if we could even have any plausible theory about it, if we could put our belief in it into any such shape as would throw light upon our real relation to it, this might seriously affect our lives. A materialistic view of this outlying reality might lower our natures; a spiritualistic view might exalt them. A view of our relations to

it, or of the ground of our belief in it, might, in like manner, debase or exalt. Thought in this direction is then challenged. The problem it would seek to solve is one of the highest theoretical and practical interest, and no such problem can be pronounced in advance to be wholly insoluble.

In what has been said, it will be seen that I have not been discussing the problem suggested. I have merely wished to make it clear that it is a real problem. In special, I have wished to lead the reader to the point where he will fully understand the problem with which Fichte at first busied himself. In order to follow the reasoning of Fichte with any sort of sympathy, or even with any degree of real comprehension, it is necessary to realize that all that is directly given us, is a single moment in consciousness with whatever is actually contained in it. If one cannot fully accept this position, one must at least have it distinctly in mind, and must be able to understand how another might naturally and not unreasonably hold this position. It must be assumed, then, that this single moment of consciousness is the only fact that we hold in direct possession. We are like one who seems to himself to be sitting in a lofty and pillared hall, looking from it out upon the landscape that stretches beyond. Of the pillars that seem to rise near him, some he has been able to discover to be frescoed imitations upon a plain surface. Those more distant he cannot reach to determine whether they also are fictitious. Of the windows that seem to look out

upon the world, some he has discovered to consist merely of painted screens. The others have been, thus far, inaccessible, so that he cannot test their real nature. Thus does the self sit in the centre of its world. It is surrounded by the semblance of reality. A part of this presentation it has found to be the product of its own imagination. The rest, so far as it is accepted at all, must be accepted on trust. I repeat that a single moment of consciousness is all that is directly given. We speak of the past. We do this in the confidence that our memory really represents what has actually occurred. This age professes to take nothing without verification. All verification depends upon the validity of memory. I do not mean merely on the accuracy of memory, so far as details are concerned, but on the validity of memory as representing a real past in the most general sense of the word. Who can verify this assumption? Who has ever gone back to see whether there be or be not a past?

I am not questioning the fact; I merely wish to make it clear that memory itself is purely of the mind, and that its testimony is accepted wholly on trust. I wish to make it clear that, so far as we are concerned, the effect would be the same if there were no past, if only there remained the mental condition that we regard as representing the past. We can understand this in matters of detail. People often are sure that they remember something that never occurred. Their mental condition is precisely what it would be if the event had oc-

curred. Make for a moment the supposition that of all that we seem to remember, nothing ever occurred; and our mental state would be as unaffected by the change as the mental state of any individual is unaffected by the falsity of his special memory in regard to special details. The same is true in regard to the outward world. If that should be destroyed, or if it had never existed, our mental state remaining the same, we should not know the difference; just as in dreams, our consciousness is precisely what it would be if the dreams represented a real world.

All this, I know, has to do with the very rudiments of philosophy. We have, in fact, escaped from the limitation of a purely subjective existence. We are like the Jin that had escaped from the casket. He was at large, and there was no power on earth that could shut him up in it again. So we have escaped from this subjective imprisonment, and are free of the universe. By no effort of the imagination can we realize the limitation of which I have spoken. There is needed, however, a philosophy that shall deal with the rudiments, that shall start with an analysis of the consciousness itself. If we are at large, we need to know by what right, and especially under what conditions. If it should appear that we are disregarding the conditions under which we are made free of the world, that we are misinterpreting the tenure of our possession, it may be helpful that we should know it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE I AND THE ME.*

WE have now to follow Fichte as he attempts to solve the problems which we have recognized.

As we have already seen, Fichte's idea of a philosophical system requires that it shall be based upon one absolutely certain and independent proposition. This proposition must not be one that can be proved, otherwise it would not be the starting point of the system. There can be but one such proposition, for if there were more than one, we should have not a system, but only an approach toward a system; or else we should have as many systems as there are propositions. This fundamental proposition must not be found among those that occur in our conscious thought; for in this case we might demand

* I will here explain a slight modification that I shall make in the use of terms which represent respectively the subject and the object of consciousness. The subject of consciousness will be naturally designated as the I. The object of consciousness will be designated as the Me. The object of consciousness, however, will be found to consist of two elements, namely, the Me and the Not-me. The Me and the Not-me are antithetical to one another; but both, as forming the content of consciousness, are antithetical to the I, which is the subject of consciousness. While it may not be possible in all cases to preserve this distinction, it will be generally maintained. The exceptional cases in which this distinction cannot be made, are those in which the I represents the whole personality.

its credentials. We should have to seek for its basis. We must go beneath our ordinary consciousness to find that proposition which shall state the ground of all our conscious thinking.

The method by which we must seek this fundamental truth, is to take some proposition that is regarded by us as absolutely certain, and will so be regarded by all; and to inquire what must be assumed in order to justify this certainty. Almost any proposition which has this obvious and unmistakable certainty would answer for our purpose; only some propositions would require a more complicated process of thought than others. The proposition from which we take our start in the search for the absolute and underlying truth, must be as abstract as possible. Any proposition that is not thus abstract, would have to be reduced to its most abstract or formal statement before it could be used. It is, then, better to start with one that is already as abstract and formal as possible. One such proposition will serve our turn as well as another. We will take the first that offers itself. When we seek such a proposition — one, namely, that is purely formal, and that nobody will or can doubt— the one that most readily offers itself is this: A is A, or, what is the same thing, $A=A$. This is a proposition that it will occur to no one to doubt— and it cannot be reduced to anything more abstract or formal. This, then, shall be our starting point.

It will be noticed that in the proposition the

existence or non-existence of *A* does not concern us. We may put into *A* whatever impossible content we will, and the proposition will still be true. Suppose we assume that *A* represents space inclosed by two straight lines. In this case our proposition would be: A space inclosed by two straight lines is a space inclosed by two straight lines. This proposition is as true as the purely formal one which it represents. If, on the other hand, our proposition had affirmed that there is a space inclosed by two straight lines, it would be false. Thus we say, not that *A* is; but that *A* is *A*.

This involves the assumption that, if *A* is, then it is *A*. In this, we do not assume that *A* actually exists. The same proposition could be made of the space inclosed in two lines as above. In regard to this, we could affirm that if it exists, it is a space inclosed within two lines.

Lest the reader should fancy these formal propositions to be purely an idle play, lest he even fail to see that they are in any true sense propositions, and thus be unable even to think the statements that have been made, it may be well to illustrate the use of the Proposition of Identity, of which the proposition *A* is *A* is an example. Such propositions may practically exist under either of two conditions. The first of these conditions is that the subject and predicate express the same content, but under different forms. Of this the mathematical equation may furnish the type. In an algebraic problem, the process of calculation is

needed to reduce the identity to its simplest form. We use the term x to express, in an anticipatory and formal way, the result that we seek. When the result has been reached, so that we can say, for instance, $x=6$, we have a proposition of identity of the kind described. It expresses identity of content under difference of form. This difference of form has, however, now become useless, and x disappears.

In the higher kinds of mathematical equation, there is the same identity of content united with a like difference of form. It is the same *quantum* that is expressed by the two terms of an equation; but this *quantum* is regarded as existing under different forms, otherwise there would be no reason for the existence of the equation.

The other case in which the proposition of identity may be practically used, is that in which one wishes to make obvious the fact that every individual of a class possesses the essential attributes of the class to which it belongs. Thus, the familiar phrase of Burns, "A man's a man," is a proposition of identity. Its formula would be A is A. Its real significance is that the individual man, whatever his outward condition, possesses that inherent worth which belongs to man in general.

It will be noticed that in neither of the illustrations adduced is there absolute identity between the subject and the predicate. In the one case, there is a difference of form; in the other, there is a difference of emphasis in regard to the content. In each

case, if it were not for this difference, the proposition would not exist. It will be seen as we advance that the fundamental proposition of Fichte is of the same nature. It also will be seen to involve a difference, and to be dependent upon this difference for its existence. Strictly speaking, there is no proposition of identity. In the proposition A is A, if there is no other element of difference, there is at least this: that one A is the subject and the other is the predicate. To the proposition of Fichte we will now return.

The proposition, If A is, then it is A, involves a necessary connection between A, the subject of the leading proposition, and the A that is the predicate of the dependent proposition. It is this necessary connection, the dependence of one upon the other, that is assumed absolutely and without ground. The proposition itself, A is A, though assumed as established without proof, must have, as we see when we think of it, some basis. There must be some reason why we are sure that A is A. This reason must exist, none the less, although it is assumed by us unconsciously, and even though in any case we might be puzzled to say what this reason is. We affirm, for instance, that the Right is Right. If we are asked why the Right is Right we might not know what to say. Most men, perhaps, have never even raised the question. Those who have raised it have given many different answers. Yet we all see, not only that the proposition must be true, but that there must be, if we could find it, some absolute ground

for its truth. We repeat, then, that the proposition, *A* is *A*, implies a necessary ground between the subject and the predicate. This ground of connection we will call, for the present, *X*.

I may illustrate the place which *X* holds in the discussion by reference to the ordinary processes of logic. We say *A* is *B*. When we are asked for a reason we introduce some intermediate term. Our ground of connection, we will say, is *C*. We have, then, the syllogistic form, *A* is *C*, and *C* is *B*, therefore *A* is *B*. In a proposition of this kind we ordinarily feel the need of a connecting element, and we seek it consciously. In the proposition *A* is *A*, it is obvious that a ground of connection is equally needed, though we may not ordinarily think of the necessity, and do not consciously seek it. We assume its existence, even if we cannot consciously state it. Until we shall be able to state it really, we will, as was just said, call it *X*.

Where are we to seek for this *X* which forms the indispensable ground of this connection between the subject and the predicate of our proposition? Whatever else may or may not be true in regard to it, two things may be affirmed without hesitation: first, its existence is assumed by the thinking subject, the I. The I pronounces the judgment, *A* is *A*. It must base its judgment upon some principle. Secondly, it finds this principle within itself. The I, in judging, follows an inevitable law which exists in itself. For this principle, whatever its ultimate form may be, the I, or the thinking subject, can give no

reason. At the same time, it recognizes the absoluteness of the principle. So truly as it judges, must it judge according to this law. It is one that is given to the I, and given to it by itself; that is, it is given to it by its own nature. So long as the I is what it is, so long as it is an I, it cannot judge otherwise.

There is a word which is so convenient a one in the presentation of the system of Fichte, and is so uniformly used in this presentation, that it cannot be avoided. I refer to the word, posit. The word is undesirable because it has a technical sound, and also because it has the fault that we might hope to escape by technicality; namely, that of being somewhat vague and ambiguous. The original German word for which this word, posit, stands, is, at least, equally ambiguous, and has been repeatedly misunderstood. At first, Fichte used it without explanation. Later he repeatedly explained its meaning, driven to this, without doubt, by misunderstandings that had arisen.* The word, posit, means to find or recognize, and thus to assume as given. The students of Fichte, even careful students, have sometimes been tempted to give to it a more active meaning, to put into it more or less distinctly the idea of

* The word to which reference is made is *setzen*. Even in the Grundlage, the use of the word is sometimes unmistakable, as: "Setzet als den Zweiten Fall, u. s. w."—Sämmtliche Werke, I, 117. In the Rechtslehre, especially, the word is sometimes explained, as in the following sentence: "The rational being *is* only in so far as it *posits itself as being*, that is to say, in so far as it is conscious of itself," III, 2. Of course, in a different connection, the word may have another meaning.

creation. The word may sometimes indirectly involve the idea of creation. The attention of the reader will be called to this secondary meaning. From the word, in the primary significance which Fichte gives to it, this meaning is wholly wanting.

In the proposition, A is A, we do not know whether or not A is actually posited. X, however, shows a connection between a hypothetical positing of A as subject, and an absolute positing of the same A as predicate. This X, which is the ground of the necessary relation between A as subject and A as predicate, is absolutely posited in the I. X has no meaning except in relation to an A; consequently the extremes which X connects must also be posited, if they are posited at all, in the I, for it is necessary that all should exist in the same sphere, if there is to be any relation between them. The A as subject and the A as predicate must then be found in the same I.

We have thus established the identity of the I. There is something in the thinking subject which is always the same, namely, X. This is absolute, whether A is actual or hypothetical. X involves, actually or hypothetically, both A as subject and A as predicate. These are, therefore, in the I, and in the same I; consequently, the I must be identical with itself. We may then substitute for the proposition, A is A, another proposition which we have found to be involved in it, namely: I am I. X is absolutely posited; that is, we recognize it as expressing an unquestionable and permanent truth.

To the proposition, I am I, which is involved in *X*, may be ascribed a similar absoluteness.

The proposition, I am I, may at first sight appear as meaningless as did the proposition, *A* is *A*. It may even appear more absurd, because it has a more definite content. We found, however, that the so-called Proposition of Identity has often a real meaning and importance. This is especially true of the proposition, I am I. The I of the subject and the I of the predicate represent the subject and predicate of the proposition, *A* is *A*. The I as subject and the I as predicate represent the I in different relations and at different moments. It affirms, then, the permanent identity of the I.

The proposition, I am I, has a very different significance from the proposition, *A* is *A*; for the former has a content only under a certain condition. If *A* is posited, then it certainly must be posited as possessing the predicate *A*. We do not, however, affirm that it is actually posited. The proposition, I am I, has, on the contrary, absolute force; for it is involved in *X*, and *X* we have found to have absolute validity. The proposition, I am I, has absolute validity, not only so far as its form goes, but also as to its content. The I is affirmed to exist not conditionally, but absolutely. The proposition, then, may with equal truth assume the form, I am.

The proposition, I am, is now recognized as true, but only as a fact. We have recognized, in the I, merely being, not activity. It is simply a fact of consciousness that we recognize the truth of *X*, and

that *X* involves the reality of the I. We have thus found that before anything is posited by the I, it must have posited itself. We affirm this, unhesitatingly, in regard to all the facts of consciousness, because we have seen that *X* is the highest fact of consciousness, and that all other facts depend upon this. Later, we shall see that the I is not merely a fact, but an activity.

This method of reaching the idea of the I through the processes of thought, is compared by Fichte with the famous procedure of Descartes. The affirmation, *Cogito, ergo sum*, Fichte rightly affirms to involve, not a deduction, of which the major premise is, Whatever thinks, is; but a direct fact of consciousness. In another connection, he criticises Descartes unjustly, by affirming that thought represents only one form of our being, while there are, besides this, many other forms. We not only think, we do much else. This criticism is false, for Fichte seems not to have recognized the fact that thought, considered in its most universal form, is a constant element of all our other activity. Descartes was sure of but one thing; that is, of his doubt of all things. In his very doubt, however, he found the certainty of himself. The position of Descartes differs, however, from that of Fichte, in two very important particulars. In the first place (and this distinction is remarked by Fichte) the proposition, *Cogito, ergo sum*, is not placed as the starting point of a system; but stands as an isolated fact of consciousness. Descartes compares other propositions with it; he deduces none from it.

In the second place, the position reached by Fichte is more explicit than that reached by Descartes. Descartes affirmed the I. Fichte proved the identity of the I.

It has been maintained by some, that the I is simply a series of states of consciousness. Hume has perhaps presented this view with more clearness and force than others, but it is stated or implied by many writers of the present day. Thought is recognized, but not the thinker. The result reached by Fichte involves the affirmation of some sort of personal identity. His fundamental proposition affirms that the I is in and through all the processes of thought.

It must not be assumed that the I is thus made to be a matter of deduction. It does not depend upon the proposition, *A* is *A*; the proposition, *A* is *A*, depends upon it. It is present in all processes of thought, not as resulting from them, but as that from which they result, and upon which they at every point depend.

It may be helpful to compare with the reasoning of Fichte, that of a recent English writer. The latter being put in the language of our time and to meet the exigencies of modern thought, may be more intelligible, or may at least have a greater air of reality than the course of thought which we have been considering. I will therefore quote a few lines from the late Professor T. H. Green. The passage quoted should, however, be taken in connection with its surroundings.

"If there is such a thing as a connected experience of related objects, there must be operative in consciousness a unifying principle, which not only presents related objects to itself, but at once renders them objects and unites them in relation to each other by this act of presentation; and which is single throughout the experience. The unity of this principle must be correlative to the unity of the experience. If all possible experience of related objects — the experience of a thousand years ago and the experience of to-day, the experience which I have here and that which I might have in any other region of space — forms a single system; if there can be no such thing as an experience of unrelated objects; then there must be a corresponding singleness in that principle of consciousness which forms the bonds of the relation between the objects." *

We have seen that the proposition, I am, must be taken as a fact. It is a fact that is absolutely given. It cannot be deduced from anything else, but all deduction starts from it. The I then posits itself absolutely. Since this recognition of itself depends upon nothing else, and since it is so absolutely given in human consciousness, the positing of itself must be the pure, or absolute, activity of the I. The I posits itself and *is* by means of this mere positing of itself; and on the other hand, the I *is* and it posits itself through its mere being. It is at once the actor and the product of the act; the doer and that which

* Green: Prologomena to Ethics, 34, et seq.

is brought forth by the doing. The act and the accomplishment are one and the same.

The I then *is*, merely so far as it posits itself; and it posits itself absolutely because it *is*. In more familiar speech, self-consciousness is at once the result of the existence of the I, and the cause of its existence, in the sense that it constitutes its essence. We understand then in what sense the word I is used; namely, in that of the absolute subject. The I may be defined to be that which posits itself as *being*. As it posits itself, so it is, and as it is, so it posits itself; therefore the I is absolutely and necessarily *for itself*. The stone has an existence for us; we recognize it, and say, There is a stone. But the stone has no existence for itself. It has no consciousness or recognition of itself. It is for us; it is not for itself. In the language of Fichte, we posit it, but it does not posit itself. Only that which is *for itself* is an I, and the *being for itself* is what constitutes it an I.

The question is often raised, What was I before I came to consciousness? The obvious answer is, I was not, for I was not I. The question arises out of a confusion between the I as subject, and the I as an object of the thought or recognition of some other subject. We try to think of ourselves as an object. The consciousness receives in this way a sub-stratum, — something that would be even without consciousness; and we ask, What is this sub-stratum of consciousness? But in all this we assume unconsciously a subject, perhaps the absolute subject. We are introducing into the problem that which is assumed by

the problem. We put ourselves, as it were, outside of ourselves; and then ask, how, in that case, we should appear to ourselves. But we cannot think without assuming our own self-consciousness. Our self-consciousness is the one thing from which we cannot escape by any process of abstraction. We live in the world of thought. Everything appears to us as we think it. The problem, What can we think of that which is wholly outside our thought? is one that is unanswerable. If we cannot answer the question, What is the object of thought apart from thought? still more unanswerable is the question. What is the subject of thought apart from thought? This is the real meaning of the question, What am I when I am unconscious? This, Fichte insists, is a question that should never be asked.

To the reader who cannot help thinking, in connection with the I, of some object to which consciousness is an accident, something to which consciousness may be added and from which it may be taken away —as a musical instrument may be abstracted from its sound, and may be considered as something to which sound is an accident, which can exist silent as well as sounding,— to him the statements just made will be unsatisfactory, if not incomprehensible. To such a reader, I would say that the difference in the point of view is, at this stage of the reasoning, immaterial. I do not wish him to make any effort to strain his thought in the direction which the discussion has been following. He will doubtless grant readily that if an I be deprived of its consciousness, the residuum

would at least be no longer an I. From being a subject it would have become an object. We are not, however, here inquiring as to the nature of the object, but as to that of the subject. We will assume, then, as granted, that the I without consciousness would not be an I; that the essence of the I, as such, is self-consciousness.

Fichte appends to the discussion certain additional propositions which grow out of it:

If the I is, only so far as it posits itself, it is only for itself. I am only for myself; but for myself I am by necessity.

To posit itself and to be, are, when used of the I, precisely the same. Therefore the proposition, I am, because I have posited myself (or recognized myself), may be thus expressed: I am, absolutely because I am.

Further, the I that posits itself and the I which is posited are one and the same thing. The I is what it posits itself as being, and it posits itself as that which it is. Thus I am absolutely what I am.

He sums all up in the statement, I am absolutely; that is, I am, absolutely because I am, and am absolutely what I am; both for the I.

The proposition, then, which must stand at the head of any system of the Science of Knowledge, must be expressed thus: The I posits originally and absolutely its own being. All this is equivalent to saying that the I is necessarily identity of subject and object. It is subject-object, and it is this absolutely, without any mediation.

Perhaps these statements, in spite of what has gone before, may need some explanation. The system of Fichte is essentially a science. He means to assume nothing that is not absolutely and directly given. In this sense, he proposes to make no assumption. This must not be supposed to mean that he begins without accepting anything as given. He accepts the self as given. A man is conscious of himself; that is, of all that his mind contains,— his thoughts and his feelings. Whatever is given more than this, is given indirectly. Fichte starts only with what is directly, and thus absolutely, given. He says thus: I am only for myself. The meaning of this is that the self which is given to anyone in his own consciousness is thus given to himself only. If others accept his existence, or if he accepts the existence of others, this is done indirectly. He is not for others, and others are not for him in the same absolute sense in which each is for himself. Indeed, at this point of the discussion, we have no right to assume that others exist. We have to do only with the one point of absolute, that is, immediate, certainty. It is often said that Fichte never passed beyond this point; that he never recognized the reality that is given indirectly. This prepossession is so common that I refer to it here in order that the reader may not fancy that he has already exhausted the thought of Fichte. We must remember that we have here to do only with that which is given absolutely at first hand, which must be the starting point of any scien-

tific treatment of our knowledge; that is, of any treatment which begins at first principles. With this explanation, I think that the position of Fichte will be clear. If the reader, after all, is not fully prepared to accept it, he will, I think, easily understand how Fichte could occupy this position without any of that extravagance that is often attributed to him. We may find that his system is extravagant. All that I urge, is that we do not assume this too soon.

We shall now have to follow Fichte in his attempt to discover whether, in addition to what is directly given, there is anything indirectly given; that is, whether we are to accept anything as existing outside the circle he has drawn; namely, the circle of self-consciousness. If there be any such reality, we have further to ask what it is, at least for us, and how we attain to the knowledge of it. Before doing this, we must, however, examine certain criticisms which have been made upon his view of self-consciousness. The criticism upon Fichte's definition of the I, is best made by Herbart.*

We must remember that the I is defined as that which is conscious of itself. Whatever is conscious of itself, is an I. Whatever is an I, has self-consciousness. The two notions perfectly cover each other. In this definition, Herbart finds two fundamental contradictions. The first of these contradictions concerns the material of the definition. The second concerns its form.

* Herbart's Sämmtliche Werke, V, 94, et seq.

The first of these contradictions resolves itself into two. The I is that which is given in self-consciousness; and this statement is considered its full definition. But to this definition there is lacking both subject and object; thus it is absolutely without material. We have words which signify nothing. We will first illustrate the affirmation that the definition which we are considering lacks an object.

Who or what is the object of self-consciousness? The answer must lie in the proposition itself. The self of which the I is conscious can be only the I that is conscious. If the definition is a perfect one, we can substitute for its terms their meaning. For the self, we can substitute the definition of that I which is the self. We have, then, this statement: The I is that which is conscious of that which is self-conscious. In this, recurs the word self again, for which we may substitute its definition as before. This process may go on forever. The end can never be reached; thus the self which is the object of consciousness cannot be reached. The pursuit of it is a progress into the infinite.

We fare no better when we seek a real subject for the proposition which defines the I as that which is conscious of itself. As soon as the I is conscious of itself, that of which it is conscious has become objective. The I which is conscious is subjective. It lies outside of that of which it is conscious. To become conscious of this I, we must in some way get behind it. We must be conscious of that which is conscious. But as fast as the I gets behind itself,

it is there as an I, which demands a renewal of the same process. The search for the Me, the object of self-consciousness, is, as we have found, a progress into the infinite; the search for the I, is in like manner a process which can never be completed.

We have thus examined the criticism which Herbart made of Fichte's definition of the I, considered as to its material. This criticism may resolve itself into a single statement. The self is subject-object. Both elements, that of subjectivity and that of objectivity, belong to it. In the definition, we attempt to separate these. We seek to place a self that is pure subject over against a self that is pure object. The attempt fails, for each of the terms breaks up into its constituent elements. The subject, because it is the self, is not pure subject, but subject-object. The object is not pure object, but subject-object. We try to eliminate the one or the other element from each of the terms, but as fast as we do this, because what we have reached is still a self, the same problem meets us, and so on forever.

It may be said of this criticism that, in the first place, it is merely formal. It is a criticism that can be made upon almost every reflex proposition. We may treat in like manner the definition of the arc of a circle. This we may define to be a curve which if sufficiently prolonged will return into itself. What is the self into which the curve returns? It is evidently the returning curve. We can substitute this full expression for the term self as before. We may say that the arc of a circle is a curve which

returns into a curve which returns into itself. We may make this substitution as often as we will. It might be continued forever. Still, the definition is a good one, and, when taken seriously, has a clear meaning. It is only when we play with the definition that it becomes obscure.

Further, it may be said that the criticism describes a process which may be repeated indefinitely, not in words only, but in fact. We may rise to *the consciousness of our consciousness.* Indeed, we actually do this. What we call consciousness is as really self-consciousness as that which we call self-consciousness, for we can be conscious of nothing but ourselves. Self-consciousness is the consciousness of consciousness. This single process is, however, sufficient; a repetition of it adds nothing to it. Such repetition will become mere play. It is so with the arc of the circle. We may draw over and over again the line that returns to itself; there may be, up to a certain point, an advantage in this repetition; our first drawing may have been too light, and we wish to deepen it; but, after a certain point, this too becomes play. Thus the *reductio ad absurdum*, as applied to the definition, expresses simply the reduction to an absurdity of the process for which the definition stands.

The fundamental mistake of the criticism is that it treats the elements of the self as if they were entities which could be separated or made to revolve about one another. The self is that which is subject-object. The fuller definition is simply an ex-

pansion of this. The I which is conscious is not something over against the Me of which it is conscious; the two are one. If the definition seems open to the criticisms above cited, it is because it seeks momentarily and formally to separate elements which have no separate existence. The two rest each in the other. So we may go round and round a circle, seeking to find some point of rest. The circle remains one in spite of our revolution. No matter which point we may assume to be the beginning, it is at once beginning and end.

The second criticism made by Herbart has reference to the form of the definition. The definition affirms the identity of subject and object; but subject and object are not identical. The one is the absolute opposite of the other, and the attempt to present them as one, involves an absolute contradiction.

This criticism, and the fact that it expresses what to many may seem to be a real difficulty, may serve to show us to how great an extent we ordinarily live outside of ourselves. The definition given by Fichte expresses a fundamental and universal fact of consciousness. We are at each moment conscious of ourselves. Some would, indeed, make this self-consciousness an act of memory. We are conscious not of ourselves at any given moment; we only recall the experience of the preceding moment. Thus, consciousness would be always flying after that of which it is conscious. But how do I know that this moment just receding belonged to me,

that its experience was my experience? This knowledge could be gained only by taking the past into my present; that is, by holding it in relation to my present. Thus, we must have a present self-consciousness to make the consciousness of our past possible. Thus, at every moment of consciousness, we have this unity which exists in and through diversity. This kind of unity is present to all spiritual activity. The statement of it expresses the very law of thought. We can think of no single element by itself; and we can have only one thought at once. Here is a contradiction that would seem to make thought impossible. We cannot think unity, and we cannot think variety. We can think both together, unity in variety and variety in unity. In other words, each thought is a unit; but it is a complex and organic unity. It contains elements distinct, yet united. The self is the type of this organic unity, as indeed it is that which creates this organic unity in thought. Notwithstanding the fact which we have just considered is one so universally present in our consciousness, being indeed our consciousness itself, it strikes many either as something marvellous or as something absurd. We are so used to living in relation to material facts, that we unconsciously apply to spirit the laws of matter. Because among material things there can be no division without fracture and separation, therefore it is believed that division in the spirit must imply fracture and separation.

On the other hand, an attempt is constantly

made to construct the unity of consciousness out of the successive elements of consciousness, even out of the atoms of which the body is composed. We are told of mind-stuff. Each atom of which the brain consists has, it is claimed, two sides — the conscious and the unconscious. When these are properly put together, the unconscious sides unite to form the brain, while the conscious sides unite to form the unity of consciousness. Thus, those who think that a contradiction is involved in the attempt to deduce from the unity of consciousness the elements that enter into it, because the same thing cannot be at once one and manifold, yet find no absurdity in the attempt to construct the unity of consciousness out of semi-material particles. The unity of consciousness is what every conscious being must admit. It is easy to show that this can be the result of no composition. Suppose these particles of mind-stuff united so as to produce consciousness, where would the consciousness be found? It could not be apart from all. It must be in each. We can only think of this crowd of particles as of a crowd of men all fired by a like purpose, each heightening the enthusiasm of the other, all together creating an intensity of enthusiasm of which no one would be capable alone; but the enthusiasm of all is simply the heightened enthusiasm of each. There are still as many centres of consciousness as there are individuals. So would it be with these mind-particles. Consciousness is

one; they are many; and each can have only its own consciousness.*

The relation of consciousness to the elements which enter into it, is then one of absolute supremacy. It is not their product; they are its product. It is, indeed, dependent upon them indirectly. There is no creator without a creation; but the creation is directly dependent upon the creator; the creator only indirectly and ideally dependent upon the creation. So the consciousness is indirectly dependent upon its contents; they are directly dependent upon it. The I is thus independent and active. Its very nature is to act. It posits itself, and thereby creates itself.

We have thus reached the Category of Reality. Philosophers have often raised the question as to what is real. This is indeed the fundamental question of philosophy. Our right to affirm reality cannot be derived from anything else. All else must be derived from it. In other words, what we recognize as the ultimate reality cannot be shown to be such by any argument. If we undertake to prove the fact of this ultimate reality, we must appeal to something that we regard as more real than it. Herbert Spencer recognizes this very clearly in his affirmation of the existence of something real outside of us. This we cannot reason to; we can only reason from it. This assumed reality outside ourselves is, however, only indirectly given. The reality which is given directly, and

* Compare Lotze: Mikrokosmus, I. 176-7.

thus which is given absolutely, is that of the I. It recognizes itself and thereby becomes what it is. Because it is what it is, it recognizes itself. Whatever other reality we may recognize, it must be derived from the I. Of whatever we can say with absolute certainty, So surely as I am, this is — of this we affirm reality; and we can affirm reality in no other way. We have also reached the Proposition of Identity: *A* is *A;* or, the I is the I. This Proposition of Identity is the fundamental proposition of philosophy. It is unconditional, both as to form and as to content. The *A* or the I is posited freely and absolutely. It is dependent on nothing else. The positing is free and absolute. It is dependent upon nothing else. In its highest form, it is self-affirmation, which is the one fundamental and absolute affirmation.

CHAPTER V.

THE NOT-ME AND ITS RELATION TO THE I.

WE have thus examined the one absolutely unconditioned proposition which lies at the foundation of philosophy. From this alone, however, no system of philosophy can be constructed. The affirmation of identity is complete in itself. It leaves no opening through which new thought can be developed. No movement can proceed from it. If we have only the Proposition of Identity we must remain fixed at it; we cannot move from the spot. There is needed, therefore, another proposition which, in connection with the Proposition of Identity, shall give the possibility for the development of thought and the impulse to this development. We may illustrate this by the logical syllogism. The major proposition is a simple affirmation leading to nothing; with the minor proposition comes the possibility of reasoning. We must now seek that second proposition which we need.

It will be obvious that this second proposition cannot, like the first, be wholly unconditioned. It must be in one sense dependent upon the first. If the second were wholly isolated there could be no connection between it and the first, and thus no development of thought would be possible. The

proposition, *A* is *A*, and the proposition, *B* is *B*, could stand side by side forever. No system could be evolved out of the two, more than out of either by itself. On the other hand, this second proposition must not be wholly dependent upon the first. It must introduce some new element; otherwise we should not have got beyond the first, and there would be no possibility of progress.

We started with the proposition of affirmation, the Proposition of Identity. The formula, *B* is *B*, or, *C* is *C*, would be only different expressions for the formula, *A* is *A*. If our second proposition is to be distinct from the first, it must then be not a proposition of identity, but one of contradiction; we will then lay down the proposition, Not-*A* is not *A*.

This proposition will be accepted as absolutely as the first. No one would demand a proof of it any more than of that. Suppose that a proof should be demanded, it could be found only in our first proposition. We can say that according to this, Not-*A* = Not-*A*. This, however, would be simply another form of our first proposition. The negative would not be proved; it would simply be changed to a positive.

In this proposition, a Not-*A* is not affirmed. Whether there is a Not-*A* or not, is left wholly doubtful. What is affirmed, is simply the fact of contradiction. This remains the same, whether the contradictory elements do or do not exist.

In this proposition it will be seen that the form is independent, while the content is dependent.

By the statement that the form of the proposition

is independent, is meant that as soon as the two elements are brought face to face, their contradictory nature is at once recognized.

So far as the dependence of the material or content is concerned, it is evident that there must be an A before there can be a $-A$, or a Not-A. That is, a contradiction implies something that is contradicted. The Not-A might very well, when taken by itself, be an X or a Y; but it is the recognition of the A as real or possible, that makes of it a Not-A. Further, it is obvious that within itself alone does the I find authority to pronounce the Proposition of Contradiction as well as that of Identity. It will be noticed, thus, that the identity of the I is as truly involved in the proposition of negation as in that of affirmation. Both elements, A and Not-A, must be found by the I in its own consciousness. If either were wholly in another sphere, the comparison would be impossible.

Fichte maintains that, in order to furnish a basis for the absolute certainty of the Proposition of Negation, there must underlie it a universal proposition like that which underlies the Proposition of Identity. As the absolute form of this latter is the affirmation of itself by the I, so the absolute form of the negative proposition would be the exclusion, by the I, of the Not-me from itself. As the only absolute affirmation is that made by the I of itself, so the only absolute negation would be that of what is opposed to the I.

The assumption of this absolute and original rec-

ognition of the Not-me is based by Fichte upon the fact that in no other way would the recognition of the Not-me be possible. He maintains that the common belief as to the origin of the notion of the Not-me is wholly false. This belief is that we find various objects which we recognize as not ourselves, and that from these we reach the general idea of externality. This, Fichte argues, cannot be the case, for in every object of each perception there must be something which marks it as foreign to ourselves; therefore, by no process of generalization can the idea of the Not-me be reached. This idea forms rather the basis of the recognition of the objects upon which the generalization is assumed to depend.

It will be seen that we have thus deduced the Category of Negation and the Proposition of Contradiction, as we have before deduced the Category of Reality and the Principle of Identity.

We have so far reached two results. The first is that the I posits itself, or the Me; the second is that the I posits the Not-me. These two, the Me and the Not-me, are absolutely opposed to one another; and we find ourselves involved in a contradiction that threatens to make impossible any further advance. So far as the Not-me is posited, the Me is not posited; for the Not-me is wholly opposed to the Me, and thus excludes it. On the other hand, the Not-me can only be posited so far as the Me is also posited; for the Not-me is meaningless and impossible except so far as there is a Me to which it may be opposed. From

the one point of view, then, the Not-me excludes the Me; from the other, it requires the Me. We have thus two propositions that are mutually contradictory. They are, however, both involved in our second proposition; namely, that the I posits the Not-me. They are both involved in this, for the I, by its very nature, assumes its own reality. The I has no existence except so far as it posits itself. To say that the I posits the Not-me, is, then, equivalent to saying that the I posits both the Me and the Not-me. Therefore, this proposition contradicts itself, and thus is its own refutation. But it refutes itself only so far as a part of itself has validity against the other part.

The first proposition involves similar contradictions. The I in affirming itself affirms all that is posited in itself. But our second proposition is posited in the I, and since it has proved its own destruction, it is not posited in the I, therefore the identity of the I is broken up, and the proposition that affirmed it is proved false. But our first proposition must be true. The unity of consciousness is involved in it, and the unity of consciousness, which is our starting point, must be recognized and preserved through our whole discussion.

Our problem, then, is to unite elements that are absolutely opposed. To posit the Me and the Not-me, is like positing X and $-X$, the result of which would be zero. The result, however, is not zero. Each step of our progress has been taken carefully; the results are absolutely founded. We can give up

nothing. We must reconcile the elements as best we can.

We can find the solution of the problem by no analysis. We must proceed by way of experiment; that is, we must take some method, such as seems best adapted to the purpose, and try whether it will or will not serve our need. The method that most naturally occurs to us is to qualify the antagonism, and to make of it a partial contradiction. The one element shall not wholly cancel the other; it shall only limit it. The Me, which was at first regarded as absolute and co-extensive with the absolute subject, shall be limited by the Not-me; and the Not-me shall be limited by the Me. But the idea of limitation implies divisibility. It does not imply a definite quantity, but the capacity for a definite quantity. Divisibility, then, is the means by which our problem shall be solved and the contradictories reconciled. The Me and the Not-me are each regarded as divisible. We thus reach our third fundamental proposition; namely, A divisible Not-me is posited over against a divisible Me.

Through this process does each element become something. The absolute I is not anything. It has and can have no predicate. To say of an unknown substance that it is, is to say nothing. We need to say what it is, to apply to it predicates. A predicate, however, implies a distinguishing, and thus a limiting. Through the process which we have followed, we have something definite. By means of it, there comes into consciousness all reality, the reality of

the Me and the reality of the Not-me. Whatever reality does not pertain to the one, does pertain to the other. Besides the Me and the Not-me there is nothing.

We just deduced the Category of Reality, next that of Negation, and have now deduced that of Limitation.

These three propositions are so fundamental to the system of Fichte, that it may be well to bring them together, and state them in a somewhat clearer form.

The first is this: *The I posits itself;* or, in other words: *The I posits the Me.* This proposition is absolute, both as regards its form and its content.

The second proposition is this: *The I posits the Not-me.* This proposition is limited as to its content, but absolute as to its form.

The third proposition, in its most abstract form, is this: *The I posits the Me and the Not-me as limiting one another.* This last proposition is determined, so far as its form is concerned. This means that the nature of its form was forced upon it by the nature of the problem of which it is the solution. In its content, it is absolute and free, because the solution of the problem is the result of an original and independent judgment.

Perhaps, before going farther, we should make perfectly clear the meaning of these propositions. Their meaning is so simple as hardly to need explanation, were it not that their very simplicity is misleading. The danger, as Fichte himself says, is not

that the reader shall not think in regard to these propositions that which they really mean, but that he shall think a great deal that is foreign to this meaning. We have in these propositions simply an analysis of the facts of consciousness; of consciousness, not as it exists in the mind of the philosopher alone, but as it is universal, as it is found even in the mind of the simplest and the most ignorant. Yet these propositions have been misunderstood even by careful students, as well as by that general public where misunderstanding might be expected.

Perhaps the first proposition has been sufficiently explained. That the I affirms itself, is simply the central fact of all self-consciousness. That it thereby creates itself, that it thereby constitutes itself an I, is a simple truism growing out of our ordinary definition of the I; namely, that it is the self-conscious subject.

The second proposition has caused the most serious misunderstanding. To say that the I posits the Not-me, has been understood to mean that the I creates its own world. By the Not-me has been understood the realities of the universe; and to make these dependent upon any individual consciousness has seemed absurd, if not impious. Kuno Fischer has well stated these misunderstandings, and has shown how foolish and baseless they are. That the Not-me, as such, is dependent upon the I is, he urges, a simple truism. The negative, as such, always depends upon the positive. The inorganic world, as such, depends upon the organic, that is, the inor-

ganic world is only such in contrast with the organic. If there were no organs, real or imagined, the world might consist of stones and water, or whatever other elements might be blended with these, but the word inorganic would never be applied to it. Fischer goes a step further. He shows that the world of objects, as such, is dependent upon the I. By objects we do not mean things in themselves; we mean things as they appear to us. Without the sight, there would be no color; without the ear, no sound; without the sense of feeling, that which we know as resistance would not exist for us; yet out of these elements is formed our whole world of objects,— trees and rocks, or whatever else goes to the making up of the world in which we have our conscious being. By such reasoning does Fischer seek to make clear the meaning of Fichte's fundamental propositions, or at least to take away their apparent absurdity.* Fischer, however, though in general so competent an interpreter of Fichte, does not in this discussion bring out the real simplicity of the propositions under consideration. I have referred to his exposition rather to complete the list of possible misunderstandings than as in any sort an explanation.

What Fischer says, is strictly in accordance with the general thought of Fichte, but it is not the thought that Fichte expresses in the proposition under discussion. We may even find that Fichte teaches that, in the phrase used above, the I does

* Fischer: Geschichte der Neuen Philosophie, Second Edition, V, 438.

create its own world. This is not, however, what he teaches here. It must be repeated that by the word, posit, as here used, is meant simply to recognize or assume. To say that the I posits the Me, is simply to affirm the fact of self-consciousness. To say that the I posits the Not-me, is simply to say that we recognize a world that is not ourselves. To say that the I posits the Me and the Not-me as mutually determining or limiting one another, is simply to say that we posit ourselves, or seem to find ourselves, in a world in which we have power to affect our environment, and in which our environment affects us. To understand these propositions, is not needed the analysis of the psychologist. We have presented in them that which is the content of the consciousness of the peasant and philosopher alike. The only fear that one can have in regard to them, when rightly understood, is, that they shall appear truisms too familiar for formal utterance. We must bear in mind, however, the results that have already been gained by the analysis, and must remember, also, that the elaboration of the system of Fichte, the real sweep of his method, has not yet been reached. When we come to analyze still further these propositions, it will be found that, however simple they may appear, they contain contradictions that may challenge, if they do not set at naught, our profoundest thought.

One other point needs explanation. The infinite I is not infrequently spoken of by Fichte, in contrast with the finite or the limited I. This term,

the infinite I, has furnished matter for much misunderstanding. The term is so large and imposing that it has seemed to many that it must represent that absolute being in which all finite spirits are contained. Here, however, we have to do simply with the results of the analysis of self-consciousness. The meaning of the words, the infinite I, can, perhaps, be best illustrated by some proposition of which I is the subject. We will take the proposition: I am bound by these chains. There is implied by this the recognition, by the speaker, of the fact that, if he were not bound by the chains, he would be free; as well as of the fact that he is actually bound. He could not be bound, in the sense in which he uses the term, if, unbound, he would not be free. The potentially free and the actually bound I are both recognized by the proposition; and both are equally necessary for its meaning. Similar elements are assumed in every act of consciousness. All states of consciousness imply limit. It matters not whether the state of consciousness be pleasant or disagreeable, voluntary or involuntary, this state implies that I am in some way acted upon, or determined by something foreign to myself. The self is divided; a part of it is excluded and is replaced by the object of consciousness. In this, there is implied the recognition of a self that, but for this, or some other limitation, would be unlimited.* This is what Fichte means by the infinite self as contrasted with the self that

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 144.

recognizes itself as limited or determined by some foreign element. This infinite self does, however, sometimes affirm itself as unlimited. When it is conscious of freedom, when it recognizes or utters the demands of the moral law, it then acts from itself alone. It utters not what it has received from without, but that which it has found within itself.

The infinite I will be the subject of further discussion as we advance.

CHAPTER VI.

THE METHOD OF FICHTE, AS SUGGESTED BY THE PRINCIPLES ALREADY LAID DOWN.

THE propositions which we have now studied, form the basis of the system of Fichte. Their relation to one another suggests his method. To understand this method fully, we must for a moment go behind these, and consider some facts in regard to propositions in general.

When we look closely at the nature of propositions, we find that every proposition of resemblance implies a difference; and every proposition of difference, a resemblance. If we say that X is Y, we imply that in some points it is not Y. If we say that X is like Y, we imply that in some respects it is different. So far as the first of these propositions is concerned, if the statement, X is Y, were absolutely true, it would not be made. We should not have X and Y at all. We should have either X or Y. Subject and predicate would be absolutely fused together, and the proposition would cease to exist. This is still more evident in regard to the other proposition, X is like Y. This implies that X is not Y, otherwise the two would not be compared. There must, then, be points of difference by which alone the

resemblance can be made possible. On the other hand, it is equally true that all statements of difference imply a resemblance. No one would be so foolish as to deny what no one could have the slightest temptation to affirm. If I say, then, that *X* is not *Y*, I imply that there are certain elements in *X*, by which, if they were taken alone, it might be confounded with *Y*. Of course the elements of resemblance may be comparatively few, but something, in this case, must have occurred to bring them into prominence. If one says, for instance, that a tree is not a house, it must be because a comparison has been in some way suggested. Perhaps it had been proposed to pass the night in the tree, or under it. This fact, that all resemblance implies a difference, and all difference a resemblance may be illustrated by almost any book of riddles. The same sort of conundrum is sometimes proposed positively, and sometimes negatively. It is largely a matter of accident whether it be in the form, Why is *X* like *Y*, or, How does *X* differ from *Y*?

Every analysis, then, presupposes a synthesis, and every synthesis presupposes an analysis. When we say that *X* is *Y*, we express an analysis, or imply that such an analysis has been made. We recognize the fact that *X* and *Y* have already been distinguished from each other. If we say *X* is not *Y*, we imply a previous synthesis by which they had been brought together. The process of thought consists largely in the alternate formation of analyses and syntheses. Each at once presupposes and demands its opposite.

This may be very well illustrated by the ordinary processes of logic. In this way the proposition demands the syllogism; and one syllogism leads to another. We say, for instance, *A* is *Z*. The statement involves a contradiction; *A* is evidently not *Z*. Indeed, the recognition of this difference forms our starting point. We need to justify our affirmation by a synthesis. We find some element, *Y*, which is common to both. This furnishes the needed synthesis. *A* is *Y*, and *Y* is *Z;* thus, *A* is *Z*. But another analysis is forced upon us. *A* and *Y* are not absolutely one. They involve points of difference. A new synthesis is forced upon us. We find the element, *X*, which is common to both. The process goes on till we reach the last synthesis possible. We had found *C* to be a basis for a synthesis between *A* and *D*. *A* and *C* we unite by means of *B*. At last we face the proposition, *A* is *B*. A further synthesis is demanded, but we cannot make it. We have no means left. We must leave the matter to rest upon absolute affirmation, or upon some intuitive perception.

I have thus indicated the method that Fichte follows in this first statement of his philosophy. In each proposition, analysis finds elements of contradiction. These are united by a synthesis. They are, however, only partially united. Extremes still remain that are not brought together. The process continues as far as it can be carried. A fundamental contradiction at last remains unsolved. Appeal is finally made to the practical reason, that

cuts the knot which the theoretical reason could not untie.

But analysis — or what may perhaps better be called antithesis — and synthesis presuppose a thesis. Antithetical and synthetical propositions presuppose what may best be called "thetical" propositions. In synthesis, objects that are distinct are united in some higher conception, as gold and silver in that of metal; thus, a definition involves a statement of both the generic and the specific characteristics. In the thetic proposition, all this is different. Of this the affirmation of itself by the I is an example. This is made absolutely. The I and the Not-me can be united by no synthesis in a higher conception. When they are to be united, the I is reduced to a lower conception — that of divisibility. The two are contrasted under the general idea of divisibility. Here is no going up, as by every synthesis; but there is a going down. The absolute I is indivisible, and nothing can be compared with it. We thus distinguish propositions of which the subject is the divisible I, from those in which the subject is the absolute I. Whatever proposition belongs to the absolute positing of the I, is of this sort, even when the grammatical subject is different. Thus the proposition, Man is Free, is a thetic proposition. It is the result of no synthesis. We do not examine the characteristics of different classes of beings — one consisting of the free, and the other of those that are not free — and decide that man belongs to the former class. There is

no such class to be found. We do not separate man negatively from the creatures of nature that are not free, which would imply that he and they were united in some higher generalization. Man, so far as he is free — so far as he is absolute subject — has nothing in common with these creatures of nature.* The very idea of freedom, as will be seen later, involves a contradiction. What it is, cannot be learned by experience, for absolute freedom is a goal rather than a fact — a goal which we may forever approach, but which we may never reach. It is a goal which the spirit has set for itself. In like manner, propositions that affirm what may be called ideal relations are to be classed as thetic. Goodness and beauty in their perfection, and thus in their full reality, we have never seen. The ideas of goodness and beauty can thus be the result of no comparison and generalization. Every such idea is an ideal. It is something to be attained. It is a goal, rather than a starting point.

Our three propositions have found, then, each its appropriate designation. By the first, the I affirms itself. This is a thetic proposition. By the second, it posits the Not-me. This is an antithetic proposition. In the third, it posits the Me and the Not-me as mutually limiting or determining one another. This is a synthetic proposition.

As has been already intimated, the movement of the system will consist in a series of antitheses and syntheses; while the thetic proposition, the absolute

* Sämmtliche Werke, I. 117.

assertion of itself by the I, furnishes the starting point, the impulse of the movement, and also the goal toward which the whole tends.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ANTINOMY OF THE NOT-ME.

WE have reached, it will be remembered, this proposition: The I posits the Me and the Not-me as determining each the other.

This involves two distinct propositions, namely:

I. The I posits the Me as determining the Not-me.

II. The I posits the Not-me as determining the Me.

These propositions, which, as we have just seen, express simply the most ordinary facts of consciousness, furnish the foundation of the whole system which we are studying.

The first furnishes the foundation for the practical part of the system. No use can at present be made of it. We do not yet know whether it is or is not absolutely true. It may be that we shall find the Not-me to be a limitation which the I puts upon itself. When we have found the reality of the Not-me, if indeed we find such reality, we can make use of this proposition. Till then, it must be left unused.

We turn, then, to the second proposition, namely: The I posits the Me as determined by the Not-me. This forms the basis of the theoretical part of the system, and we can make use of it at once.*

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 126

The I posits the Me as determined, or limited, by the Not-me. This is the proposition from which we must now take our start. Doing this, we must keep in mind the method which is followed throughout by the system that we are studying. The method is to discover by analysis the contradictions that are involved in any given proposition, and then to seek to reconcile these by a synthesis.

The proposition under consideration involves contradictions. These may become apparent through a difference in emphasis. We may say: The I posits the Me, as *determined by the Not-me;* or we may say: *The I posits* the Me as determined by the Not-me.

The first of these statements affirms that the Me is limited by something that is not itself. The I appears to be not all; but to be conditioned by that which is external.

The second form of emphasis affirms the absoluteness of the I. It *posits* the Me as determined by the Not-me; and whatever the I posits, it posits in its own consciousness. In consciousness, the I is the only actor. As we have seen, it is the result of its own positing of itself. It is by self-consciousness that it becomes an I. Whatever is found in consciousness is thus the result of its activity. To say, therefore, that *the I posits* the Me as determined by the Not-me, is simply to say that the I determines itself.

We have thus deduced from the general proposition, The I posits itself as determined by the Not-me, these two subordinate propositions, namely:

The Not-me determines the Me.

The I determines itself.

From one of these, as we shall find, is developed the Category of Causality; and from the other, that of Substantiality. These two Categories, at first, will seem to be wholly antithetical to one another, and will represent the elements of the antinomy contained in our general proposition.

It may now be well to translate the terms of this antinomy into the language of our common life, and thus to show that they involve no merely seeming difficulty artfully conjured up by a process of dialectics in order that it may be removed by another process, but a difficulty that we must all feel to be involved in every act of consciousness. I find myself in a world of objects, by many of which I am affected. Some limit me painfully, invading my life or checking my activities. Others affect me pleasantly; but they affect me, none the less. At every moment, my inner life is determined by them. I have no doubt of their reality. Never, for a moment, can I separate myself from them, so far as my consciousness is concerned. I seem to be conscious of them as I am conscious of myself. When, however, I think carefully of the matter, this very fact that I seem to be conscious of them suggests a grave difficulty. I can really be conscious only of myself. I can prove that the elements that make up this world of objects are thoughts and sensations of my own. I cannot escape from the world of my own consciousness. Yet, no matter how clearly I may prove this, the world of

objects remains, for me, a world that is foreign to myself. I can prove it to be the Me; I can not think of it except as the Not-me. To put the difficulty into a somewhat different form: If these objects are outside of my consciousness how did they ever get into it? or, if they are in my consciousness, how did they ever get out of it? We have, here, the problem, the solution of which Fichte is to attempt; and at this point his system properly begins.

We have found, in the proposition with which we started, a contradiction that seems absolute. The proposition seems, thus, to cancel itself by its very affirmation. It cannot, however, cancel itself, for it involves the unity of consciousness, which is the very basis of our investigation. There must be some element which shall make a reconciliation possible.

The problem to be solved is this: How does it happen that the I feels itself limited by the objects that fill its consciousness, while it is itself the creator of them? The state of things here contemplated may be illustrated by the consciousness that we have in a dream. Indeed, the thought of the dream must be, all along, our standard, for we have not as yet found any ground of difference between our waking state and a dream. In a dream the objects of consciousness are confessedly the creation of the I, yet even in the dream the I feels itself limited by them.

Fichte bases his discussion of the matter upon the thought of what he calls the sum of reality.*

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 129.

Reality is neither an infinite nor an indefinite amount. Reality, as it exists for any one individual, is the entire content of his consciousness — the object which stands over against the subject. If we could conceive of self-consciousness, without any object save the Me, the distinction between subject and object would still exist. The Me, in this case, would be all the reality that is recognized. It would, for the I, be the only reality. If the Not-me is recognized, as well as the Me, the content of consciousness would not be thereby extended. This content is always quantitively the same. When the Not-me is seen to exist by the side of the Me, it does not manifest itself as something added to the Me. The place that it occupies is taken from that which the Me would have occupied had it been alone. Thus, the Me is actually limited by the Not-me; and this is none the less true because the Not-me is itself the product of the I. It is, of course, equally true that whatever reality is ascribed to the Me is taken from the Not-me. The two elements are thus mutually determined.

The definiteness of the content of consciousness, and thus of reality, is a fundamental thought with Fichte, and should be distinctly recognized. One may, by a very imperfect illustration, compare the field of consciousness to the illuminated circle cast by a magic lantern upon a screen. It has its definite size, and thus its possible content. This circle is always filled, either by the pure light, or the object which may be represented; or they may divide the field

between them. So much of the space as is occupied by the object, is held exclusively by it; and from this the pure light is excluded. On the other hand, so far as the pure light fills the field, the object is excluded. Perhaps another illustration may make a part of the statement more clear. Suppose, in the first place, that A has at his command an amount of money practically unlimited. He gives four thousand dollars to B, and appropriates four thousand dollars to his own use. In both these acts, he proceeds with absolute freedom; neither act is dependent upon the other. While giving B the four thousand, he might have devoted five or seven thousand to his own use with equal ease. Suppose, on the other hand, that A is the owner of exactly ten thousand dollars. Now, if he gives four thousand to B, he remains, of necessity, the owner of six. The sum which he retains in his own possession is determined by the amount which he gives to B. He thus determines the amount of his own possession, but not with absolute freedom. This amount is determined by the sum which he gives to B. We can thus understand how, in the process which Fichte describes, determination and self-determination are blended. The reality which fills the consciousness being a definite sum, so much as the I ascribes to the Not-me is taken from the Me. Though the act is in part free, it is in part determined.

The problem is thus solved, so far as it was proposed. Many questions, however, remain still unanswered. The fundamental question, how the

I can posit negation in itself, and reality in the Not-me, is untouched; and, so long as this question is unanswered, we have accomplished nothing. The I is pure affirmation; and we have, thus far, no hint of the possibility of the entrance into it of the negative element.

We began by recognizing the principle of determination. From this general notion, we have reached the idea of a definite kind of determination; namely, that by which the elements mutually determine one another. That is, the determination of one depends upon that of the other, that of the Me depending upon that of the Not-me, and the reverse. This mutual dependence of determination Fichte affirms to be what is called, by Kant, Relation. The two elements stand in relation to one another.

Relation is itself a general term. As we attempt to solve the contradiction that still remains, we must seek some definite forms of relation. Whatever could be done by the idea of relation in general, has been accomplished; by these definite forms of relation we may hope to accomplish still more. The difficulty with the idea of relation in general, is that the elements related stand upon a precisely equal footing. Each determines the other. It does not matter from which side we start, we have to determine to which of the elements absolute priority belongs. Reality is posited absolutely by the I in itself. But we have posited the Not-me as a quantum; and every quantum is something, and thus has reality. Therefore, the Not-me becomes not merely

negative, but a negative quantity. We thus have two quantities opposed to each other. So far as we now see, we might call either positive or either negative. If the Not-me is negative to the Me, it is equally true that the Me may be regarded as the negative of the Not-me. Unless this ambiguity is removed, the unity of consciousness is destroyed. The Me and the Not-me have, each, reality. They are no longer opposed. Each is what the other is; and the Me and the Not-me are one.

We must seek some mark by which we may distinguish the positive from the negative; by which, thus, we may absolutely distinguish reality from that which is opposed to it. The source of all reality is the I. With this, whatever reality we can recognize is given. The very idea of reality is given by it. But the I *is*, because it posits itself; and it posits itself because it is; therefore to posit itself and to be, are one and the same. But, further, the idea of self-positing and that of activity are one and the same, for this self-positing is the original and fundamental form of activity. Thus reality is active, and whatever is active is real. Activity and reality are one and the same thing.

According to the first of the subordinate propositions that we are considering, the I is determined or limited. Thus reality, or, what is the same thing, activity, must be cancelled in it. Therefore, the opposite of activity must be posited in it. But the opposite of activity is passivity. Passivity is absolute negation, and is thus distinguished from mere

relative negation. If, when the I is in the condition of passivity, the absolute sum of reality is to be preserved, a like grade of activity must necessarily be transferred to the Not-me.

Thus, the difficulty that met us is solved. We can affirm no absolute reality of the Not-me; but it has reality so far as the I is passive. So far as we can now see, the Not-me, has, for the I, reality only so far as the I is affected; and, apart from the affection of the I, it has no reality.

This affirmation that there is no reality to be ascribed to the Not-me, except it is necessary to assume this through the affection or passivity of the I, is, it will be noticed, guarded by the qualification, "So far as we now see." In fact, Fichte always remains by this affirmation. In support of it, it may be asked: How, if the Not-me has any reality apart from its relation to the Me, should we ever know it? What right have we, then, to affirm such being? We may not, indeed, be able to deny it, any more than we can deny any affirmation in regard to matters wholly beyond our knowledge; but, in regard to such matters, there seems little place for affirmation, or even for question. By such suggestions may the position of Fichte be made to appear rational, even to those who are not prepared fully to accept it. He himself pauses to emphasize the importance of this position in relation to this whole system.

By giving a real meaning to the proposition that affirmed that the Me is determined by the Not-me,

we have deduced the Category of Causality. This, although contained under the general Category of Relation, is yet specifically different from this. Under the Category of Relation, it was left doubtful to which of the related elements reality should be ascribed, and to which negation. Under the Category of Causality, this uncertainty does not exist. In this, activity is opposed to passivity. Activity represents the cause, and passivity is the effect. The active cause is real and positive. Passivity is negative. Thus, the Not-me is real and positive so far as it is a cause. The I is negative so far as it is passive, and is affected by the Not-me.

We have thus considered the contradictions that are contained in one of the subordinate propositions, which were developed out of the proposition which forms the basis of the theoretical part of the system. This subordinate proposition is this: The Not-me determines the Me. The other subordinate proposition was this: The I determines itself. We have now to consider the contradiction that may be contained in this.

It will be understood that we are now to develop the other side of the antinomy, and that, thus, our process and its results will be wholly unlike those just contemplated.

The contradiction contained in the proposition, The I determines itself, is found in the fact that the I is affirmed to be both the determiner and the determined. It is active and passive at once.

Both reality and negation are ascribed to it at

the same time, which is certainly a contradiction. The contradiction would be solved if we could make each member of it dependent upon the other, so that the activity should involve the passivity, and the reverse. This would be accomplished if we could affirm that the I determines its activity through its passivity, or the opposite. We have now to ask whether this affirmation can be made, and, if so, in what sense it can be made.

If we are to recognize any one thing as determined by another, we must have some standard by which we can measure it; for only by such a standard can we judge how far the thing has been modified by the influence that has acted upon it. Such measurement must be found in the I itself, and is the sum of reality, which we have already seen to be posited in it. By this standard of measurement can we judge how much reality is lacking at any moment to the I; that is, how far it is passive. We have, thus, a lack of reality contrasted with the fulness of reality.

Reality, however, has been found by us to be equivalent to activity. This lack of reality is, therefore, a lack of activity. Passivity, then, must be shown to be related to activity. By this, is meant not the passivity of one object that is related to the activity of another; but the passivity of any one object as related to its own activity. For this relation, some common term is needed between the two. This term is found in the idea of activity itself. Passivity must be regarded as activity, but

as a lower grade of activity. A lack is nothing in itself. What really exists is that which remains after that which is lacking has been taken. Passivity, then, does not stand in contrast to activity as such. The contrast is between it and the fulness of activity, from which nothing has been subtracted. We have thus found the common term, which we may call *X*, between activity and passivity. It is in itself activity. The passivity is simply a diminished activity.

Draw a circle, and the plane that is included in it stands opposed to the endlessness of the space which is excluded. Draw within this another circle, The space inclosed within it is, like that in the outer circle, opposed to the outlying and unlimited space. It is also opposed to the space included in the first circle, but which is outside itself. The inner circle may thus be regarded from two opposite points of view. It is a part of the larger circle; and is at the same time opposed to it. We will now pass from this illustration to the reality which it symbolizes. The I, in its completeness, would represent the larger circle. Any particular modification of the I — any special form under which it may at any moment exist — would be represented by the smaller circle. The I is the fulness of activity. The modified form would also be activity, but a partial activity. Take for instance the phrase, I think. This is, at first, an expression of activity. The I acts in thinking. But it is also an expression of negation, and thus of passivity. The activity

of thought is only a portion of the full activity of the I. Thinking is in contrast with other forms of activity, which may be excluded by it. It is at once, then, positive and negative — an activity and a passivity. Every predicate of the I involves this same contradiction; it is at once positive and negative.

We can thus understand how the I, by means of its activity, determines its passivity; and how, thus, it may be at the same time both active and passive. It is active, or determining, so far as it, through absolute spontaneity, puts itself into a single one of the many forms of activity that are open to it. It is determined, so far as it is regarded as included in this special sphere, without regard to the spontaneity by which the limitation was accomplished. We have thus found a new Category, which, like that of Causality, is contained under the general Category of Relation;—that is, like Causality, it is a special form of Relation. It is the Relation of Substantiality.

So far as the I is regarded as containing all the spheres of reality, or all the forms of activity which belong to it, it is Substance. So far as it may be regarded as occupying only a portion of the fulness which belongs to it, one element only being present, all others being excluded, we find what is known as Accident. Thought is an accident of the I considered as substance. The limit which separates this special sphere from the great totality is that which makes it to be an accident. The

possibility of these accidents — that is, of these partial manifestations of itself — is what makes the I to be considered as substance.

Substance is the whole circle of possible changes, considered as a whole. The accident is any one of these states, which replaces or is replaced by the rest.

It is to be noticed that we have not as yet inquired into the nature of the I by means of which it differentiates itself into substance and accident, nor what occasions it to make this differentiation. So far as we can guess from what has been already said, the occasion of this act of limitation, or differentiation, must be found in the Not-me. We find here an illustration of the method of the system that we are studying. We find a contradiction; we introduce some middle term by which the contradiction may be solved. When we have done this, we find that the first difficulty was removed only that a new one may be introduced. The chasm may be a little narrower, but it still exists. So far as the I is limited by the Not-me, it is finite. In itself, however, considered as pure activity, it is infinite. We have, then, to reconcile the contradiction between the infinite and the finite. This is, from the very nature of the case, impossible. After we have done our best, there will still remain an unsolved contradiction.

We may now analyze our results, and consider at what point we have arrived and what remains to be accomplished. We will first consider the Category of Causality. Suppose the I to be limited wholly by the activity of the Not-me. Just so far as it is invaded

by the Not-me, is a certain portion of its activity cancelled. So far as this limitation is concerned, the I is merely passive. The negation is posited, but not for the I itself. It is posited only for some intelligent being outside the I, who observes the transaction, and recognizes the limitation. The I would be determined or limited, but it would not posit itself as determined or limited. This could be posited only by some being outside it. Thus, only the part of the proposition would be found true which affirms that the I is determined by the Not-me. It would be thus determined, but it would not so posit itself.

Let us now consider the matter in relation to the Category of Substantiality. According to this, the I would have the power, without any action of the Not-me, arbitrarily to posit a lessened amount of reality in itself. This is the assumption of Transcendental Idealism. It is the assumption of the system of Leibnitz; namely, that of a Preëstablished Harmony. When this limitation has been accomplished, the I would certainly posit itself as determined; but we can see no reason why it should posit itself as determined by the Not-me. The fact that it does ascribe this limitation to the action of the Not-me is denied by no idealist. The right to make this assumption is, however, denied by the idealist. The difficulty remains, to explain how the I comes to assume the action of the Not-me as limiting it, when it has no right to assume this. We have here a dif-

ficulty that no merely idealistic philosophy can explain.

Starting from the point of view of realism, which is represented by the Category of Causality, the difficulty is, to understand how the I should recognize the Not-me, which is supposed really to exist. Starting from the point of view of idealism, which is represented by the Category of Substantiality, the difficulty is, to understand how the I should come to posit the Not-me, which has no existence.

We meet here, after all our attempts at reconciliation, the same antinomy with which we started. The Category of Causality has led us to recognize the reality of the Not-me, and the fact that the I is limited by it. The Category of Substantiality would lead us to recognize the I as alone existing, and the Not-me as a form of its activity. The former would furnish a basis for the materialistic philosophy, or for a philosophy like that of Spinoza, based upon the idea of the absolute substance. The other would give a basis for transcendental idealism, or for a system of preëstablished harmony.

Idealism is unsatisfactory because, as we have seen, it cannot explain what it undertakes to explain. The theory of a preëstablished harmony is, in addition, inconsequent. It assumes both the Me and the Not-me; so far, it accords with the realistic systems just referred to. It, however, regards all the modifications of the mind as deduced from the action of the soul itself in absolute independence of the Not-me. It meets the demand of the realist without accepting

the reason upon which he bases these demands. It accepts the assumption of the idealist, while retaining the machinery of an outward world, which is no longer needed.

We have thus brought the realistic and the idealistic systems of philosophy face to face. Neither accomplishes what it undertakes. The one assumes that the I is limited by the Not-me, and thus fails to recognize the fact that the I limits itself. The other assumes the I to be self-limiting; but it cannot explain how it should come to regard itself as limited by the Not-me. A new attempt at reconciliation must be made.

The contradictions that we have been considering seem, when we examine them, to render any advance impossible. The I can posit no passivity in itself without positing activity in the Not-me, and no activity in the Not-me without positing passivity in the Me. It can posit neither without the other. It can posit neither absolutely — that is, independently of the other. It thus can posit neither first. It can begin nowhere in its process of positing. Thus it can posit nothing. This is, however, in direct contradiction with our fundamental proposition, and would destroy the unity of consciousness.

We meet here a difficulty similar to that which we have met before, and this contradiction must be solved as other contradictions have been solved by us. We must, while recognizing the mutual contradiction of the two propositions, assume this to be partial. We may say, then, that the I posits *in part* passivity in

itself so far as it posits activity in the Not-me; but *in part* it does not posit passivity in itself so far as it posits activity in the Not-me; and the reverse. In other words, the passivity of the one in neither case stands in perfect relation to the activity of the other. The dependence of the two terms of the relation is thus no longer absolute. The I and the Not-me have each an activity that is independent of that of the other. We have what was needed; namely, a power of initiation. The deadlock is broken, and the process that seemed wholly excluded is free to manifest itself.

Such independent activity, however, contradicts the principle of relation which we had before reached. We have elements that are unrelated. This contradiction must be solved like the others, by making each term of it partial. The validity of the principle of relation shall be partial, and the independence of the elements shall be partial.

The independent activity of the one element cannot act upon that of the other; and the reverse. The relation in which the elements stand to one another may, however, be related to the independent activity; and the independent activity may be related to it. Thus, the demands of each side of the contradiction are met.

When we ask in general what is the nature of this independent activity, we must look for our answer once more at the relation between the activity and passivity which we have just seen to be dependent upon it. This activity and passivity are

mutually dependent. There is no activity of the Me without passivity of the Not-me; and the reverse. There must, then, be some common element by which both are united, and upon which this relation depends. A result reached already by us may indicate the nature of this common element. It is reality, or, when the relation is considered as an action, it is activity. We have already recognized the idea of the limited quantum of reality — or, from another point of view, of activity. No reality can be cancelled; therefore, just so much as is taken from the one side must be posited on the other. This furnishes the basis for the mutual dependence of the Me and the Not-me, and is the independent activity that we need.

The principle which we have just reached furnishes the ground for the independent activity of the Not-me and of the I, considered each as taking the initiative in the relation between them. This application of the principle can best be seen by making use, as before, of the Categories of Causality and of Substantiality. It must be noticed that, under the Category of Causality, the general principle above deduced exists as a quantum of reality, forming the content of consciousness; while, under the Category of Substantiality, it is regarded as existing as a quantum of activity, forming the subject of consciousness.

We will first consider the matter under the Category of Causality. Passivity is posited in the subject. To this must be opposed activity in the

Not-me. The basis of the relation is found in the idea of quantity, as has just been described. The content of consciousness must be divided between the Me and the Not-me. Passivity in the Me is the ideal ground of the activity of the Not-me; that is, it is the ground upon which we assume the activity of the Not-me. The requirements of the relation between the two are thus fully satisfied.

Looked at from this point of view, we have no longer merely a difference of quantity. We have a difference of quality. Passivity is posited as a quality wholly different from activity. The ground of a quality is a real cause. An independent activity of the Not-me must be posited as the real cause of the passivity of the Me; and this activity is posited in order that we may have a real cause for the passivity.

We have here the strongest statement of one side of the antinomy, which underlies our whole discussion. We have reached the point where we recognize the independence of the Not-me, and its absolute causality in relation to the Me. Fichte pauses in his reasoning, to recognize this fact, and to insist that this position should not be regarded as a final one. We pass, therefore, at once to the consideration of the other side of the antinomy. To reach this, we consider the relation of the I and the Not-me, under the Category of Substance.

The fundamental nature of the reasoning under this Category has already been considered. We have seen that passivity is qualitatively not to be distin-

guished from activity. Passivity is only a smaller amount of activity. The ground of relation is here activity. In this the Category of Substance is to be considered as different from that of Causality, under which the mediating ground was found to be quantity. Here it is the activity of consciousness. There it was the content of consciousness.

In the Not-me, however, a limited amount of activity is also posited. The question arises, How then shall the limited activity of the Me and that of the Not-me be absolutely distinguished from one another? If no ground of distinction can be found, our whole labor will have been lost.

Further, it is assumed that the diminished activity should be the activity of the same I in which the sum of activity is posited. According to our previous results, under the Category of Causality, the activity that is opposed to the total activity should be posited in the Not-me. Should it be posited in that, however, there would be no relation possible with the total activity. We must seek, therefore, some mark by which the diminished activity of the I shall be absolutely distinguished from that of the Not-me, and by which the required possibility of relation may be established. From what we have already seen of the nature of the I, this characteristic must be the positing absolutely and without ground. This lessened activity must, therefore, be absolute. But absolute and without ground means wholly unlimited; and yet this act of the I is the becoming limited. The answer to this is that only

so far as it is an act is it without ground. The act is wholly spontaneous; but, so far as it is directed upon an object, it must be determined. In other words, if the act is to take place, it must be directed upon this object.

We have thus reached the thought of the independent activity of the I, that is needed. This is not absolute activity in general, but absolute activity which determines a relation. This activity is called Imagination.*

The imagination fills with Fichte the same place that it does with Kant, and which it must fill in any idealistic philosophy. In every such philosophy, the world of objects, in the midst of which we seem to live, is a world of phenomena, or of appearances. We have only sensations of various kinds. It is the imagination that creates, out of these, the full and rounded world of our daily life. The relation in which the imagination stands to the Me and the Not-me in their relation to one another, is obvious. They are its creation. We have thus fulfilled the condition which was required. We have found an independent activity that stands in relation, not merely to the Me, or to the Not-me, but to the relation that exists between them. It is the basis of the very possibility of this relation.

In the discussion which we have just followed, one point is barely indicated which is made much more of in the later forms of the Science of Knowledge. The act of the productive imagination is

*Sämmtliche Werke, I, 160.

maintained to be perfectly free, so far as the act is concerned; but the results of this activity are determined in case the act takes place. In other words, we are perfectly free to think or not, perfectly free to exercise this creative power or not; but if we choose to make use of the power which we have, the results must depend upon the fixed nature of this power itself. This may seem contrary to our experience, according to which the world, whether real or phenomenal, is a fixed fact for us, and not at all dependent upon our volition. Fichte would seem, however, elsewhere to refer the exercise of this freedom to a point anterior to our life of conscious experience;* to reach, in fact, a position similar to that of Schelling in his discussion of Human Freedom.† The hint given of this view in the work that is now before us, is interesting as being one among many indications that the system of Fichte remained substantially the same, through all the varied forms of statement; and that the views later developed underlie all the earlier statements. The implication is here found in the fact that the ground distinctly taken in all later statements is required, if the earlier statement is to have any meaning.

The discussion at this point becomes so elaborate and complicated that it would be impossible to attempt a condensed statement that should give

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 159. Compare Sämmtliche Werke, II, 107, in the statement of 1801; and 648 in Die Thatsachen des Bewusstseyns.

† Untersuchungen über das Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit,—*Schelling's* Sämmtliche Werke, 1st Abtheilung, VII, 335.

more than the rattle of the machinery; or an exposition that should not stretch beyond the limits within which the present work is confined. We can simply indicate as briefly as possible the nature of the discussion, and its more important results.

The relation between the Me and the Not-me is analyzed more carefully than before. In this relation there exist four elements. These are the Material of the Relation, its Form, the Independent Activity upon which the Material depends, and that upon which the Form depends.

The Material of the Relation consists obviously of the elements that enter into it; namely, the Me and the Not-me. The Form of the Relation is the nature of the dependence which one of these elements has upon the other. The nature of this dependence we have already seen to be the following: So much of the absolute reality as is not posited in the Me, must be posited in the Not-me; so much as is posited in the Not-me is not posited in the Me. The one thus involves and suggests the other. The passivity of the Me brings us to the thought of the activity of the Not-me as its real cause; the activity of the Not-me suggests the passivity of the Me as its ideal ground.

The Independent Activity upon which the Material is dependent, is, as we have seen, the imagination which creates these elements. The Independent Activity upon which the Form of the Relation depends, is the consciousness, which is led by the presence of the one element to the thought of the other,

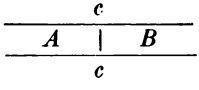
and which thus discerns the nature and the necessity of their mutual dependence. In other words, in every act of the productive imagination, may be found two elements. One of these may be called the objective element; it is that which furnishes the matter of consciousness. The other may be called the subjective element; it is that which recognizes and adopts this material.

These four elements — the Matter, the Form, the Independent Activity of the Matter, and that of the Form — are considered in every possible aspect. The dependence of each upon all the rest, and of all upon each, is elaborately discussed. Each point is considered under the Categories of Causality and Substantiality. The result is to show the mutual dependence, and, indeed, the identity of all these forms of relation. Neither has any meaning apart from the rest. We have but one process considered under various aspects.

The elements of the relation are thus shown to have no existence apart from the form. That is, these elements are mutually dependent, one upon the other. Their relation is polar. They are simply antithetical to one another. The Not-me is simply the antithesis of the Me. The Me is simply the opposite of the Not-me. Neither has any existence or any meaning apart from the other. If there be no subject, there can be no object. If there be no object, there can be no subject. This relation of dependence does not, of course, include the I in its absoluteness. This is independent of antithesis and

of synthesis. Its activity is independent and essential. The reference is only to subject as the correlate of object; or, to use the form of expression that we have generally adopted, to the Me in relation to the Not-me.

We have thus reached a result which may occasion some difficulty. We have found that neither the Me nor the Not-me has any meaning apart from the other. Each exists only through, and in relation to, the other. On the other hand, they are mutually exclusive. How shall this mutual exclusiveness be reconciled with this mutual dependence? The two must meet in our consciousness, or else we can have no recognition of either. How can they thus meet, when each, by its very nature, excludes the other? The solution of this difficulty Fichte finds in the idea of limit or boundary.



Let *A* and *B* represent two divisions of space, which touch each other at the line *c*. What relation has the line *c* to these two tracts of space? Does it belong to neither of them, or to either of them; and if to either, to which? It cannot belong to neither, for in this case the line *c* would be a space between the two tracts, while, according to the supposition, they touch one another. The line *c* is merely a mathematical line that marks a distinction, but indicates no separation. If it belongs to either of

them, to which of them shall it belong? If it belongs to *A*, then it is not the line of division. It is a part of *A*, and no longer the line *c*. The line *c* must be pushed forward toward *B*, so far, at least, as it may be supposed to have before covered any space. If we make it a part of *B*, the same change of relation exists, only in the opposite sense. What was the line *c*, is now a part of *B;* and another line *c* must be drawn by so much nearer to *A*. It must then belong to both. In other words, at the line *c*, *A* and *B* are no longer distinct. They meet, then, each being what it is, each antithetical to the other, yet so far as this line is concerned, coexisting. We cannot thus analyze the line *c*, however, without, in our imagination, giving it a real extent. As we thus speak of it, it has become to us no longer a mere mathematical line, as it really is, but a strip of space.

The line *c* may represent the meeting point of the Me and the Not-me. At their mutual boundary line they are one. Fichte affirms that the imagination has the power to hold this line and to broaden it; and thus the difficulty is solved.* The meeting of the two mutually exclusive elements is accomplished. This meeting is all that was needed for the possibility of recognizing each in its relation to the other.

We have thus reached the most complete recognition that is possible of the relation of the Not-me to the Me, and of its absolute dependence upon the I.

*Sämmtliche Werke, I, 225, et seq.

The positing of the Not-me is the act of the I as truly as the positing of the Me; and the Not-me belongs to the I as truly as does the Me. This relation is illustrated by a careful and somewhat elaborate discussion of the nature of substance. Substance has been assumed throughout, but at this point its nature is for the first time fully analyzed.*

The nature of substance may be illustrated by the various relations under which iron exists. Our first notion of iron is, that in itself it is without motion. If it is moved, it can only be by means of some power foreign to itself. The idea of motion is thus excluded from our conception of iron. We, however, later observe that it moves when no one is bringing any force to bear upon it. We find that this motion was occasioned by the neighborhood of a magnet. We find that to move thus when a magnet is present, is one of the properties of iron. Our notion of iron is thus enlarged. Let A represent iron at rest. Let B represent iron in motion, under the influence of the magnet. At first, our notion of iron would be expressed by A. B would be something wholly foreign to it. Now, our notion of iron is expressed by $A + B$. Iron never, at any one moment, fulfils this formula. In other words, A and B are never present at the same time. $A + B$ is always determined either by A or B. When the iron is at rest we have $A + B$ determined by A. When it is in motion we have $A + B$ determined by B. The nature of iron, then, is found to con-

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 195, et seq.

sist in this determinability. This determinability is what we express by the word Substance. If we had only A — in other words, if things were absolutely persistent and unchangeable, manifesting always precisely the same attributes — we should have no idea of substance. Substance has no meaning except in relation to accidents. No accidents, no substance; no substance, no accidents. It is the accidents, taken collectively, that give us substance. $A + B$ is the substance, of which A and B are the accidents. Determinability is the substance, of which determinations are the accidents.

Let us now apply this illustration to the special object of our study. Let A represent the act of the I in positing the Me, which, as such, has no existence except as thus posited. Let B represent the act of the I in positing the Not-me. At first, we sought to represent the I by A alone. B, we thought, was wholly foreign to it. Its positing of the Not-me was regarded as the recognition of something outside itself. We now find that the positing of the Not-me is as truly its act as the positing of the Me; that the Not-me is dependent upon the I as truly as the Me; that it has no existence except as posited by the I. We thus no longer represent the I by A. We represent it by $A + B$. We find that its substance, like all substance, consists in determinability. This determinability is expressed by the formula just given.

We have thus gone as far as it is possible in the direction toward the making of the Not-me the mere

product of the I. We have found that the positing of the Not-me is wholly the act of the I; that the positing of the Not-me belongs to the nature of the I. Our difficulty is, however, not wholly removed. The *quale* of the I is absolute activity. It is, as we have seen, considered in itself, infinite. What could have moved it to the positing of itself as limited, and of a limited Not-me over against it? The difficulty is not removed by the discussion in regard to the nature of substance. Though the positing of the Not-me is an accident pertaining to the substantiality of the I, yet none the less do we demand the occasion of the manifestation of this accident. It belongs, indeed, to the nature of iron to move under some circumstances, as truly as it does to remain fixed when these circumstances do not exist. The magnet, however, must be present if the movement is to occur. What shall take the place of the magnet in relation to the I?

The difficulty that has met us throughout, we find to be thus waiting for us at the end of our analysis. It presents itself in a somewhat different form, but the difficulty is the same. We can no longer seek to avoid it by analysis of mental processes. This analysis can be carried no farther. The whole matter has been reduced to its lowest terms. The difficulty at last must be fairly and squarely met.

Fichte meets the difficulty in this way. He assumes the existence of some obstacle, against which the activity of the I strikes, and, in part,

recoils upon itself.* This obstacle need not be supposed to be of the nature of a thing. It is merely a limit that is placed about the I.† Against this the activity of the I strikes. It is in part checked, and, as we have seen, turned back upon the I. This collision, then, is the occasion upon which the I posits the Not-me.

We have now to see how far the requirements of the case are met. In the first place, the absoluteness of the I is preserved. If the obstacle is anything but an obstacle,— that is, if it has any activity of its own, so that it invades the I,—we cannot conceive how this result should have been reached. The I would be a thing acted upon by another thing. The I, however, is alone active; and the collision does not take anything from its activity. The I only takes occasion from this to manifest its activity in a different form.

Not only does the I still remain infinite, so far as its independent activity is concerned; this infinitude is needed for the very idea of the collision. If the activity of the I were limited, it might be supposed that this check arose because the limits of its own nature were reached. If the limits of its own nature merely were reached, it may be asked, whence can come that superabundant activity, which is reflected back, as we have seen, and thus furnishes the origin of consciousness, and of the objective world? It is because the activity of the I is pressing into the infinite, that we recognize the

*Sämmtliche Werke, I. 210. †Same. 279.

necessity of the collision that has been described, and can understand the results that follow.

In the second place, we have still the absolute dependence of the Not-me upon the I. It must not be supposed that the limit against which the activity of the I strikes, is that which is represented by the Not-me. The objective world, which, as we have seen, the imagination creates, is wholly independent of this. We must not imagine, for instance, a world of things, the changes of which are followed by changes in consciousness, which do not reproduce them but correspond to them; as the reflections in a distorting mirror follow the changes of the reflected objects by changes of their own, different from them, but corresponding to them; as in the Transfigured Realism of Spencer. We may, perhaps, illustrate the relation as viewed by Fichte, though very imperfectly, by what sometimes occurs during sleep. The sleeper is partly aroused by some sound or touch, and forthwith creates a world of dreams. These dreams may not in any way, or, at most, only incidentally, represent the sound or the touch. The impression from without is only the occasion upon which the mind freely creates the objects which make up the dream. The content of the dream comes not from without, but from within.

It must be distinctly noticed that this limit is found by the I — not created by it. In accounts which we sometimes meet of Fichte's Philosophy, the opposite view is taken. The I is represented as limiting itself. Fichte represents the limit as something that

forms an obstacle to the activity of the I — as something against which this activity beats as against an obstacle lying in its way. We shall later seek further the nature of this limit. It is enough for our present purpose to recognize it as something found by the I; and in that sense as something foreign to it. It is merely a limit; that is, this boundary has no existence except as such. It does not stand for a continent of solid reality against the shore of which dashes the unceasing activity of the I. All this, however, does not affect the relation. It is, none the less, a line drawn about the I *ab extra*.

To know precisely where we stand in the discussion, it is well to notice the various philosophies of the Not-me which Fichte recognizes, and which he contrasts with his own. We first meet what he calls Qualitative Realism.* This is the view which men ordinarily hold in regard to the outward world. There is a world of things about us which are as real as the mind itself. These things stand in no dependence upon the mind. They would exist if all forms of spirit were annihilated. They act upon the mind. Their changes cause changes in the mind, and these mental changes represent more or less accurately the changes without. Indeed, the inner world is a more or less perfect copy of the outward world. and contains little, if indeed it contains anything, that is not impressed upon it from without. This view may, of course, be held in greater or less fulness. The essential element of it is the indepen-

*Sämmtliche Werke, 185, et seq.

dence of the Thing-in itself, and the real impression produced upon the mind by it. It is called Qualitative Realism, because the Not-me is qualitatively different from the Me.

Over against this stands the view which Fichte calls Qualitative Idealism. According to this view, nothing outside the mind is recognized. The mind creates its own world. It does this without law or limit; in other words, the relation between the Me and the Not-me is regarded as wholly lawless and arbitrary.

A second form of idealism is called by Fichte Quantitative Idealism. This we have already examined to some extent, and need to do little more than refer to statements already made. The view is based upon what we have known as the sum of reality, or the sum of activity. This introduces a law into the relation between the Me and the Not-me. We have the one really dependent upon the other. Each has its being in the other. If I divide a surface into two parts, each simply excludes the other. What is given to one is taken from the other; and what is taken from one is given to the other. The I still acts without being affected by anything outside itself. Both the Me and the Not-me are its product; but by the very act of positing them, this relation of mutual dependence is introduced into their relation to one another.

Over against this Quantitative Idealism, we have what Fichte calls Quantitative Realism. This is the position that we have just reached in our analysis.

The Thing-in-itself, according to this view, is not regarded as qualitatively distinct from the mind, or as producing any specific impression upon it. We have simply a limit that possesses no quality whatever. As being thus merely a limit, it must be regarded as quantitative merely. It simply is something against which the activity of the I impinges; and from which the I takes occasion to posit the world which it recognizes as the Not-me.

No one of these views is wholly satisfactory. Each involves difficulties which the rest seek to avoid, and seeking to avoid which, they fall each into difficulties of its own.

Qualitative Realism is in itself inconceivable. It assumes that the Real can in some way pass into the Ideal; that the Not-me can in some way become the Me. It treats the I as *a thing* which may be acted upon by other things, as though they all belonged to the same class. We can, indeed, imagine the I to be a thing thus acted upon, but it would cease to be an I. Put such a thing in the midst of the chain of Physical Causation, and how would thought and feeling arise? In other words, the I and the thing belong to wholly different Categories. They are infinitely unlike. One is the polar antithesis of the other. How then can the one act upon the other? This is a difficulty which many besides Fichte have felt. Spinoza sought to solve it by his sublime Monism; and Leibnitz by his doctrine of Preëstablished Harmony. Fichte insists upon the impossibility of solving the difficulty. According to him, as

we have already seen, the doctrine of the Preëstablished Harmony introduces an illogical extravagance into what was in itself inconceivable. If the outer has no effect upon the inner, if the thing and the mind both go on their independent way, where is the need of introducing this elaborate machinery, the movements of which correspond with the inner changes that are wholly independent of them? If you convince me that the vision that I seem to have of a man, is an optical delusion, where is the need of supposing a real man to be doing what my vision seems to represent? The hypothesis is cumbersome and needless.

Qualitative Idealism is as unable to explain the facts of the case as Qualitative Realism. Why should the I thus limit itself? Why should the I mistake its own creation for something foreign to itself? This position simply affirms an act of independent creation that is wholly lawless and uncaused; while even this groundless assumption would not, even were it established, explain the facts of the case.

Quantitative Realism attempts to avoid this difficulty. It suggests the occasion on which the I finds itself moved to recognize a form of being opposed to itself. In it the faults that we found in Qualitative Realism are reduced to a minimum. They are, however, not wholly removed.

For Quantitative Realism it was claimed that, according to it, the independence of the I, the absoluteness of its activity, remained. The I, according

to this view, is not acted upon by the Not-me. The Not-me, which it recognizes as such, is its own creation. It simply takes occasion to enter upon this act of creation from the collision that it has with the limit, which is all that, according to this view, represents the outward thing. It is obvious, however, that this impinging is an interference with the absoluteness of the I. The fact that an occasion for a change in the form of its activity is thus furnished to it from without, shows that it is so far limited. No slighter limitation could be possible; yet the limitation and the interference are there. The antinomy remains that has confronted us at every stage. This antinomy has become merely the shadow or vestige of what it was; but even in this attenuated form it demands solution as truly as it did in the grosser form under which we first met it. Since no more attenuation is possible, and since the form of the antinomy still remains unsolved, it must be pronounced insoluble. Our analysis thus ends with an unsolved and an insoluble contradiction.

We have thus reached the limit of what Fichte calls the theoretical part of his system. The proposition underlying this portion of the work is this: The I posits itself as determined by the Not-me. We have analyzed this proposition so far as analysis is possible. We have solved contradiction after contradiction, only to find that each gives place to a new contradiction, more refined and abstract than that which preceded it, but no less real. We have reached the point where further analysis is impossible, and

the contradiction still remains. The theoretical method is thus powerless to reach the result which we are seeking. We must, therefore, turn from it to the practical part of the system, to see whether the practical reason may not afford a solution which the theoretical reason cannot reach.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRACTICAL SOLUTION OF THE ANTINOMY.

THE proposition which underlies the practical portion of the discussion is this: The I posits itself as determining the Not-me.* At first this proposition was, it will be remembered, found to be unserviceable. We did not know whether there was in reality such a thing as the Not me. We have found that we cannot avoid the recognition of the Not-me, under however attenuated a form. We have now to ask whether the I can really determine it; and, if so, how and to what degree. Especially are we to ask whether, practically, we can reach the solution which, theoretically, is impossible.

From this point of view we can first really understand the nature of that antinomy which has haunted us through our whole discussion thus far. The comprehension of Fichte's position will be helped by a reference to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason; for, in this first systematic presentation of his system, Fichte follows very closely the method of Kant, and his system can be best understood by a comparison with that of Kant.

The antinomy which we have been considering fills the same place in the system of Fichte that the

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 246, et seq.

antinomies fill in that of Kant. Like them, it rests upon a purely psychological basis. The antinomies in Kant have their origin in the fact that in the mind there are two distinct faculties or methods of action; namely, the understanding and the reason. These are, so to speak, on different planes; and in their workings and results are absolutely incommensurable. Each has its own laws and its own end. The two occupy an equal rank in our intellectual nature; thus neither can be subjected to the other. We must use both; we must trust to both; and yet, when we compare the results to which each would lead us, we find them mutually exclusive. So far as the understanding is viewed in relation to empirical results, its world is too small for the reason; but when the measureless sweep of its Categories is considered — the endless regressus on the line of Causation, the analysis that can find no point of rest — the world of the understanding is found to be too vast for the architectural unity which the reason demands.*

The antinomy which plays so important a part in the system of Fichte, rests also upon a psychological basis. The one side represents the practical reason, the activity of the *ego*, which presses into the infinite. The other side rests upon the theoretical reason. Intelligence and consciousness under any form are inconceivable without some limit. We have thus the infinite I and the finite I, face to face. The one will assert itself, and will, therefore, be absolute. The other will be intelligent and self-conscious, and

*Kant's Werke, Rosenkranz' edition, II, 335 and 376.

must, therefore, be limited. We see thus the hopelessness of any attempt at solution. Both of these elements belong to the nature of the I. If either of them should be surrendered, the I would no longer remain. Both must be accepted. Yet to accept both is to remain in the presence of an unsolved contradiction, which would make philosophy impossible. At least, any theoretical solution, and thus any system of philosophy based upon theoretical considerations, is impossible. It may be, however, that practical considerations will, at least partially, remove the difficulty. If we cannot untie the knot, perhaps we can cut it. This was what Kant did. With an "It must be" he swept away all the difficulties which had made an "It is" impossible. This fact in the procedure of Kant may prepare us for the method which Fichte really adopts.

The antinomy, expressed in its most condensed form, is this: The I is both infinite and finite. This proposition is self-destructive. It affirms and denies in the same breath. This proposition, however, is the outcome of all our analysis thus far. This analysis was based upon the most indisputable facts of consciousness. Each element of it has been deduced so carefully that it must be accepted as true. Yet, when we bring the elements together, they mutually destroy one another.

This contradiction has its roots deeper than would be implied by the statements already made. It is found in the very idea of the infinite I itself. The term I has no significance, except as an expression of

consciousness or intelligence. If the infinite I be indeed an I, it must then be intelligent. It is, however, fundamental with Fichte that consciousness or intelligence implies limitation. The term, infinite I, is, therefore, equivalent to the term, limited infinite, which is obviously a contradiction.

The contradiction thus lies at the basis of our whole discussion. We might trace it, if it were worth while, step by step. Our first proposition was that the I posits itself. This appeared to be the I as unlimited. It came simply together with itself. It was an act of absolute self-assertion. But, as we have seen later, the Me cannot be posited without the Not-me. The royal act, then, by which the infinite I posits itself, is an act, to a certain extent, of abdication. The I cannot posit itself without limiting itself.

We thus see that the infinite I and the intelligent I are not in opposition. The latter is the ally of the former. It is through it alone, that the infinite activity affirms itself. This, then, is the very root of the antinomy that we have been tracing. The I cannot affirm itself without affirming that which is not itself. The infinite cannot affirm itself without becoming finite. Finiteness is the only means for an end which it contradicts.

From all this, it must not be supposed that the I is merely finite. It represents an infinite activity. It feels that all limitation is a narrowing and constraining of that which, without such limitation, would be limitless. The I is thus conscious of its

infinitude, though the very consciousness is a limitation.

The contradiction seems thus absolute; absolute in itself and equally absolute in its necessity. It is the solution of this contradiction that we have now to seek.

The very absoluteness of the contradiction suggests the method of solution. If it cannot be weakened, it must somehow be avoided. The only method in which this can be done suggests itself naturally to the mind. If it is affirmed that *A* is *B*, and, at the same time, is not *B*, and if we accept the statement as true, we see at once that the terms must be used in two senses; that in one sense *A* is *B*, and in another sense it is not *B*. So if the I is at once infinite and finite, it must be infinite in one sense and finite in another. Only in this way can the two apparently contradictory statements stand together.

This we find to be the case. The I, in order that it may be intelligent — even in order that it may be an I — must recognize itself as limited. It must posit something that is not itself. In this it is finite. On the other hand, this positing of a limit is all that is required. The I is not limited as to the point where the boundary must be placed. It may put it wherever in infinity it may choose. Its finiteness consists in the necessity of a limit; its infinitude, in the power to place the limit where it will.

It may be well to explain and emphasize again the nature and the necessity of this limit. It is fundamental to the nature of the I that it should be in-

telligent. The condition of this intelligence is the positing of the Not-me; that is, the positing of a limit to itself. So long as the I is what it is, must it yield to this law of intelligence; thus, so long must it limit itself. In other words, it finds itself limited, and thereby intelligent. But a limit is all that is essential. This limit the I can push forward into the infinite. It can never fully escape it, yet it may be, to infinitude, tending to escape it. It may always move in the direction of infinitude. It may always be becoming infinite. This is a goal toward which it may ever press. It is, however, a goal that can never be reached. It may ever press the limit further and further, but not till the end of eternity can the limit ever be wholly escaped.

In this fact, Fichte finds, as he repeatedly insists, the basis of faith in immortality.* The I has this impulse to infinitude. It is conscious of an infinite activity. The very term, *conscious* of infinite activity, as we have seen, involves also the consciousness of finiteness. Thus is the nature of the soul double. Thus does it find itself at first baffled and bewildered. It finds only contradiction. As, however, it rises to the real assertion of itself, as it claims that inheritance which it feels really belongs to it, it finds the limits give way. They seem, for the moment, to fall off from it. As soon, however, as it has tasted the joy of freedom, it finds itself again oppressed. The limit has been only pushed to a little greater distance, but it is there, as real and as solid as at the

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 270.

first. Again and again must this process be repeated with the same result. This is the very nature of the soul. It must continue the process till the end be reached. But not till eternity be exhausted would it be possible to reach the farthest limit of infinity. The process is endless; endlessness of time must therefore be postulated. The destiny of the soul is always accomplishing itself, and is, therefore, never fully accomplished. The I thus carries within itself the pledge of its own immortality. Should the end ever be reached, the I would become God.* Let no one be startled by the statement. At the latest moment, the soul would be as far from the limit of infinitude as it is from the end of eternity; as far, thus, from both as it was at its earliest start; thus, though, if the process were fulfilled, it would become God, at the latest moment that we can conceive in eternity the soul would in fact be as far from being God as it is to-day. The finite is always infinitely removed from the infinite.

We have now reached the solution of the paradox that has haunted us so long; so far at least as, in the judgment of Fichte, a solution is possible. The difficulty has been to reconcile the positing of itself by the I, with the fact that it posits something foreign to itself. The former act implies absoluteness; the latter implies limitation. Both must be true, in spite of the apparent contradiction. The former is involved in the fact that the I *is;* the latter. in the fact that the I is *intelligent.* The reconciliation is

* Fichte's Sämmtliche Werke, IV (Sittenlehre), 151.

found in the fact that, while the limitation must be assumed by and for the sake of the intelligence, as a reality, absolute freedom from limit exists as a postulate. This postulate is always accomplishing itself, though it is never accomplished.

Man feels that his destiny is to be wholly independent of that which is foreign to himself. The end and aim of his existence is thus to assert himself in the face of that outward universe which is, on its part, also self-asserting, and which is always invading the realm of the absolute personality. Man feels within himself the power to accomplish this end which his nature demands; he often feels, indeed, that he is accomplishing it. He feels that the barriers are moving before him, that the area of his freedom is becoming enlarged, that he is thus pressing into the infinite. These feelings are true. The fact is in accordance with them; but the process is an eternal one, and its end will never be fully reached.

We have already enumerated four stages in the development of our thought in regard to the relation between the inner and the outer worlds. These stages were marked, it will be remembered, as Qualitative Realism, Qualitative Idealism, Quantitative Idealism, and Quantitative Realism. To these must now be added a fifth. The position now reached by Fichte, and maintained by him as his final one, he calls Critical Idealism.

We have here a complete revelation of the closeness with which Fichte, in the work which we are

now studying, imitates the procedure of Kant. Kant, also, as we have seen, found himself face to face with antinomies. He found it impossible for thought to solve these. They are by their nature insoluble. Where thought failed, however, the moral sense succeeded. He was like a combatant who proposes to his adversary that they shall lay aside the swords with which they were contending. His opponent yields; and they stand, face to face, disarmed. The battle is a drawn one. Suddenly, however, he produces another weapon, a pistol, that he had carried concealed about him. His adversary stands unarmed and helpless before him. Such was the procedure of Kant. As the advocate of the truth of religious faith, he brought his adversary to a compromise. It was agreed that no arguing could prove either the positive or the negative of the great question at issue. So soon, however, as the truce is accomplished, by the aid of the postulate, the existence of which his adversary had not suspected, he wins an easy victory over his now disarmed opponent. For this reason the system of Kant is called critical. Each of his fundamental treatises is called a *Kritik*. All purely logical processes are shown to be powerless. The postulate of the practical reason alone remains. So Fichte calls his result also critical. We have a Critical Idealism, which is so called because it recognizes the powerlessness of the arguments, both of the common Realism and of the common Idealism, the powerlessness even of that sublimated Idealism

and Realism that he calls Quantitative. Neither of these is competent to explain what needs to be explained. By the postulate that has been described, however, he forces a positive result. It is Idealism still, but it is Critical Idealism.

We may notice, also, another point of resemblance between the procedure of Fichte and that of Kant. This is a resemblance that will become more and more distinct as we advance. It is, indeed, a resemblance which will ultimately lead to the completing of the one-sided and fragmentary results reached by Kant. It is this: The self-assertion of the I, which is here postulated by Fichte, will prove to be precisely the Practical Reason of Kant. The way in which the results of Fichte give completeness to those of Kant may be illustrated by the part which belief in immortality plays in each system. Immortality is demanded by Kant in order that some power, apparently outside both of man and his surroundings, should accomplish a relation between man and his environment which neither man nor the nature of things could bring about. Immortality is thus postulated as something which might be supposed to be foreign to man's nature, and which is provided in order to give space for the working of a power also foreign. With Fichte no foreign element is recognized. Immortality is found to be implied by the very constitution and condition of the I itself. It furnishes a field for no outside power, but for the activity of the soul. The soul feels its infinitude. It feels also its limitation.

By its very nature it demands that this infinitude should be realized. It feels itself to be in its normal condition when it is bringing about this realization. The work, however, is an endless one, and demands eternity. After this general view of the position of Fichte, we will return to the development of his system.

The sense of limit cannot be aroused without some means of comparison, by which the activity that is checked at the boundary that has been referred to, shall be seen to be inadequate to manifest the real nature of the I. Without some such comparison, the I might be seen by some spectator from the outside to be limited, but it would not itself recognize the limit. In fact, we never feel a limit which belongs to the constitution of our nature. No man feels, for instance, the limitation of his own judgment. We go through the world applying our verdict of good or bad, beautiful or ugly, with absolute confidence that we can trust implicitly to our own perception.

> "'Tis with our judgments as our watches; none
> Go just alike, yet each believes his own."

If we feel such limitations at all, it is because our natures are more developed in certain directions than they are in others. We may have learned to trust the judgment of others in regard, for instance, to certain matters of taste, more confidently than we do our own. This sense of limitation is the result of comparison of the results of our own judgment in the past, with the results of the judgment

of those whom we now respect as more to be trusted than ourselves. This procedure is, however, wholly superficial and arbitrary. We have simply learned the fact of our limitation; we have no sense of it. We cannot see why everything is not precisely as it appears to us — the uninteresting, uninteresting, and the attractive, attractive. We know from experience that, to a better judgment, the appearance may be wholly changed. What is to us uninteresting may be to it beautiful. Though we may know this, the knowledge is, as has been said, superficial and meaningless. Thus there are many who go through life without even learning their limitations. They lay down their crude estimate of things with as much confidence as they did at the first. They are limited for others — that is, to the perception of others — they are not limited for themselves. Those who have learned the lesson, have learned it merely as if by rote. They are not limited for themselves ; they have simply learned that in the view of others they are limited. We never recognize a limit that we have not in some sense or degree already passed. If we have partly passed the limit, and in part are restrained by it, then only are we really conscious of it. The animal is not conscious of its finiteness. It is, for reasons that can be better explained later, conscious of outward and physical limits. Of the limits of its own nature, it may be supposed to be unconscious, because it has no hint of anything that transcends these. It has no vision or divination that has pressed beyond them. With man, it is

different. He runs, if the expression may be used, in advance of himself. His prophetic soul reaches vague suggestions of that which it has not yet attained. It thus becomes conscious of its limitations. It is not true merely that it presses toward the mark of its high calling, because it feels that it has not yet attained, and is not perfect. It is even more true that this sense of imperfection, and of the unattained, springs from the fact that the spirit is really pressing on, ever reaching out in advance of the position actually gained, and discovering thus that this position cannot be a final one, and that by tarrying there the spirit fails of its true end.

The nature of the relation which has just been indicated in a general sense, is described by Fichte in a more abstract way. In connection with this abstraction, he uses mechanical illustrations which give to the statements an air of scientific precision, but which are merely figures of speech, by which we may represent to ourselves the principle under consideration. Such a mechanical and figurative presentation was that of the impingement, from which, as we have already seen, the I receives the impulse to posit the Not-me, and thereby the Me. Such mechanical illustrations will occur, not infrequently, as we advance.

The statement of Fichte is, briefly, this: The I is the source of two forms of activity. The one stops, say at the limit, *c*, the other presses beyond *c*, into the infinite. Being so unequal, the two forces can be compared, and thus recognized by the I.

Though their inequality is thus the means of their recognition, yet, since the I is one, its activities should be one. The I, therefore, cannot rest content with this inequality, but demands that it should be removed. Since the infinite force represents the *reality* of the I, the I demands that the other should be made equal to it. This is impossible, since this would imply an infinite extension. It remains, then, a postulate that is never perfectly fulfilled.

We will now analyze this presentation, and make its application more clear. The facts that need explanation and illustration are these. The I feels its limit because it presses beyond it; and it presses beyond the limit because it divines something to which it has not yet fully attained. For these results, are needed different forms of activity that can be compared between themselves, and some basis or standard for this comparison. In order to make the discussion more easily understood, we should, perhaps, define more carefully the terms used. We have to ask, then, What is meant by the limit with which the I finds itself confronted? The limit is the world of objects within which the soul seems to be inclosed. These form a limit, because they do not follow the wish and will of the I. They are not precisely what it would have them. They are thought of as representing a force outside the I. This force and its results are compared with the ideal of the I, and found wanting.

Although these objects are regarded as the products of a foreign force, they are really the products

of the I. As we have seen in discussing the antinomy of the Not-me, the fact that we are conscious of them shows that they are really within the consciousness. We may call the activity that posits them, the objective activity of the I. With this, and with the external force which it posits, is to be compared another activity of the I, which goes beyond this objective limit, and thus makes it an object of consciousness. The need of this basis for comparison is found in the fact that nothing is recognized by us, except in contrast with something else. This is assumed by our common speech, according to which, to see a remote object, and to distinguish it, are one and the same thing.

We have then to ask, What is the nature of that activity of the I, which is contrasted with the objective activity? To this question there can be but one answer. The I has only two forms of activity. One is the objective activity just described; the other is the absolute activity, by which it affirms itself. The objective activity, as the name implies, is limited. It goes as far as the object, and there stops. The other is described as pressing beyond this limit, out into the infinite. The contrast between the two is what makes it possible to recognize each. The I would know nothing of its infinite activity, if it were not for its finite, objective activity; and the reverse. Without the Not-me, there would be no consciousness of the Me; without that of the Me, there would be none of the Not-me.

These two forms of activity are wholly indepen-

dent of one another. They have nothing in common, except in the fact that each is a force, and that each belongs to the I. How then shall they be compared? The object posited makes the comparison possible. It serves as an index, to show just how far the objective force reaches, and thus that the infinite force presses beyond it.

The I brings these forces into comparison. If they are thus brought into relation, they should be absolutely equal. This equality is demanded by the fact that the I is one. It can tolerate, therefore, no difference within itself. All its activity must be one. The act of positing the object is its activity. Therefore the I, comparing this activity with its infinite activity, demands that the two shall be equal and alike. If they are not, there is found to be a discord in the I itself. But so surely as an object must be posited, the two forms of activity are not equal and alike; for the object itself, by its very existence, implies a limitation. The objective activity of the I is, therefore, limited; that by which it affirms itself is absolute. The two are, therefore, utterly unlike. As we have seen, however, the I demands their equality. They must be absolutely equal. Since, however, they are really not equal, but must be made so, the question arises, Which of the two shall be made to correspond to the other, and which shall be assumed to furnish the ground or standard to which both must conform? It is easy to see how this question must be answered. The I must be absolutely independent, while all must be

dependent upon it. Thus the object must correspond to the I. It must conform itself to that; and it is the absolute I, which, by reason of its absoluteness, demands this.

Fichte attempts to make the matter clear by another form of presentation.* The activity, Y, is given. This represents the objective activity of the I, or, more concretely, as manifesting this activity, it represents the object itself. With this activity, the fundamental and absolute activity of the I is brought into relation. In order that the two may be compared, we suppose another object outside the I, equal to $-Y$, which represents the absolute activity of the I, and is thus its equivalent. We have thus two objects over against the I, each representing one form of its activity. Y is the real object, or what we recognize as such. It is the Not-me, which is posited by the I, and which forms its limit. It is the world with which we stand in relation. On the other hand, $-Y$ is an object that has no existence, except in thought. It lies in a world in which all the activity of the I is really one, in which there is no discord or difference. In other words, $-Y$ is an ideal, and exists only in an ideal world. Thus Y and $-Y$ are not in accord; they stand, on the contrary, in contrast with one another.

From this relation of difference, two results of the highest importance spring. One is the demand of the I that the two shall be alike, that Y shall be made similar to $-Y$, that the real shall be made

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 261.

absolutely one with the ideal. The second result is the recognition of the object itself. The object is known as such, because it stands in contrast with the absolute activity of the I. If there were not this contrast, then there would be no object. The I would be all in all, and precisely for that reason it would be nothing; for without the object, the I would be unable to posit itself.

The importance of the position which we have now reached, so far as the system of Fichte is concerned, is obvious. We are at the heart of the system. We have reached the point where the various lines of thought meet, and from which we must start afresh for future investigations. It is, therefore, essential, for the comprehension of Fichte, that this position be thoroughly understood. It is important that one should not only be able to repeat the formulæ by which the thought of Fichte is uttered, but that one should see the real meaning of these formulæ. Only thus can one see the truth that underlies them, and can thus judge whether this truth has been forced to yield results which are not really contained in it.

It will be remembered that, as we have already seen, Fichte refers to a passage in Kant's Introduction to the Critique of Judgment as suggesting the point from which he started in his independent thought. The passage from Kant, here referred to, is that in which he recognizes the practical and the theoretical reason as standing over against one another, as having different systems of laws, and as

being, to our thought, irreconcilable. Kant intimates, however, the possibility that there may be some unity in which this antagonism is solved. This principle of unity he recognizes as the supernatural. It was this recognition, by Kant, of the fundamental antinomy of our nature, and its possible solution, that fired the thought of Fichte. In this statement, we have the definite problem, which he undertook to solve, and we have reached the point in the discussion where his solution of the problem is given.

We have recognized, all along, the antinomy between the practical and the theoretical reason. The practical is represented by the absolute I, which posits itself, which will recognize no contradiction, which will be all and in all. Wherever it finds opposition to itself, it demands conformity. It will lay down the law for the universe. It compares with its own ideal the actual reality that surrounds it, and demands that this reality conform to it. Its ideal, being an object, is, so far as its form is concerned, foreign to itself; but, so far as its content is concerned, it is one with itself. This ideal, as a mirror, reflects the I; so that, when the I surveys it, it contemplates itself. The I would have the real objective world also as its mirror, so that it may find itself in this as well as in its ideal. This is the demand which it makes of the universe. It is a demand which it makes without reason or justification. The only reason is that this demand springs from its essential being, and it cannot go behind that. When we prove anything, we simply bring

the statement we would prove, to the test of the fundamental law of our own nature; and this demand that the outward should correspond to the inner, this demand on the part of the I for absolute independence and self-assertion, is that fundamental nature which furnishes the test for all else, but which itself is absolute, admitting of proof or justification as little as it admits of disproof or confutation. This demand represents the practical reason of Kant. Fichte claims to have shown, as no one else had shown or had undertaken to show, the real nature of this demand of the practical reason. Kant recognized the categorical imperative, but he had not shown its true nature or basis. Fichte claims to have shown this, by recognizing, as the absolute postulate, that all things should conform to the pure I — a postulate which is based upon the recognition, by the I, of its absolute nature, through which all is posited, or, if not, should be. Only because the I thus posited is itself absolute, has it the right to make an absolute postulate. Since this is the only possible basis of the categorical imperative, Fichte claims that the position of Kant must have been, at bottom, the same as his own — that Kant tacitly recognized that infinite nature of the I upon which Fichte confessedly bases his philosophy. Kant himself refused to recognize the identity between his system and that of Fichte. None the less have we reached the point where the system of Fichte touches most closely that of Kant, and where

he seeks to bring to absolute completion the system of Kant.

Over against this Practical Reason — the positing of itself by the I, or the demand for this perfect positing of itself — we have the Theoretical Reason. These two, Fichte has brought into a sharper antithesis than Kant had done, and, from the nature of his system, could do. Kant simply saw the two as distinct, and guessed only that they might be united in some supernatural unity. With Fichte the two are antithetical. We may even call them polar to one another. The Practical Reason is the positing of itself by the I; the Theoretical is the positing of that which is not itself. The two, as we have seen so often, are mutually contradictory and exclusive.

To trace the antithetical relation between two elements is the first step to a reconciliation. Two elements that we know simply as different, cannot be harmonized. We know too little of them and of their relation to one another to know where to look for any principle of harmony. When, however, we have brought them into the relation of a direct antithesis, then we see that our knowledge of this relation is complete and final. We know just where to seek for the principle of unity. Moreover, we have at least an indication of the nature of this unity. If we have found that X and Y stand in a relation of polarity to one another — that is, a relation of direct and absolute antithesis, so that the one *is simply* the opposite of the other — then we know

that the one is absolutely dependent upon the other. When we have reached this point of absolute divergence, so that unity seems impossible, all at once the unity is reached. If X is polar to Y, then without X there is no Y, and without Y there is no X. The positive and negative poles of a magnet, the north and south poles of the magnetic needle, are directly contradictory to one another. We may literally apply the common phrase and say that they differ *toto cœlo*, for they point to opposite extremes of the heavens; yet they are bound together as no merely harmonizing elements can be. If X and Y stand in a polar relation to one another, then X has its real being in Y, and Y has its real being in X, just as the north pole has its being in the south, and the south pole in the north, for, without X, Y would be an impossibility, and the reverse.

The statements that have just been made are merely formal. We know that, under the circumstances described, X and Y must stand in the relation of mutual dependence, so that each is merely in and through the other, but we do not see the nature of this relation. We know, however, enough of the nature of the practical I and the theoretical I, to take a step further, and comprehend the nature of their mutual dependence. The relation between the two, therefore, is not merely formal; it has a content which we can study. The nature of this relation we have already seen. The I would posit itself absolutely; by its very nature it is driven to do this. This is, however, to demand an

impossibility. The I cannot posit itself without positing that which is not itself, for this positing of itself is an act of consciousness; and consciousness, according to Fichte, is impossible without the limitation of the Not-me. We thus see how the Practical Reason is dependent upon the Theoretical. On the other hand, the Theoretical Reason is equally dependent upon the Practical. The object which the Theoretical Reason, by its very nature, recognizes, would not be recognized by it, if it were not for the contrast between the object and the ideal which is demanded by the Practical Reason. If the world actually corresponded to the ideal, so that the I should find only itself in it; or if, on the other hand, there were no ideal with which to compare the actual,—in either case the object would not be perceived. The Practical Reason and the Theoretical Reason would be alike empty of content.

Thus that unity between the theoretical and the practical reason, the possibility of which Kant recognized, Fichte claims to have found. This principle of unity would be, according to Kant, the supernatural; with Fichte, the I is the supernatural. Thus the three absolutes which, according to Fichte, Kant recognized — namely, the Practical Reason, the Theoretical Reason, and the Supernatural Principle of Unity — Fichte claims to have reduced to one. The Principle of Absolute Unity is found. This unity, however, is a postulate rather than a fact; it is continually accomplishing itself, but is never accomplished. Thus, not only do we have the three abso-

lutes of Kant reduced to one; in this one Absolute, we find the source and the nature of Kant's Categorical Imperative, and, through it, that of the Postulate of Immortality which was based upon it by Kant. The relation of this solution of the problem to Kant's Postulate of the Divine Existence we shall consider later in speaking of the system of Fichte in its theological aspect.

From the point which we have reached, another characteristic of Fichte's philosophy becomes more distinctly seen than was possible before. The system recognizes nothing but activity. It is purely dynamic. Further, this activity is purely of the spirit. According to the ordinary view of the world, the spirit is largely passive. It finds itself in the midst of a thousand objects which force themselves upon it. They invade it, they control it, they impress themselves upon it; and through this impression of things upon the soul comes sensation; and through sensation comes thought. Then at last does the soul react upon the outward world. The initiative, however, has been all along with the outward world. That is the reality, upon which the soul is dependent. The soul is the wax, the outward world is the seal; or at best the soul is the instrument which the stroke of the outward world smites into music. With Fichte, all this is different. The soul, or the I, is pure activity. It is nothing save by its own act. Its very being is the positing of itself; thus, through this act alone, it has being. Through this activity, it recognizes also the object.

If it were not for this infinite activity, there would be to it no object. The lake, resting in the bosom of the hills, might fail to recognize the unchanging circle which shuts it in. The stream, however, if we may suppose it to have any capacity for consciousness, cannot fail to recognize the rocks that stand in its way, and past which it rushes in its impetuous course. The Me and the Not-me — the self and the object recognized as the opposite of the self — are both the product of the infinite activity of the I. Should it rest, it and its universe would perish together. Rest, however, it cannot. It may become more torpid than its true being would demand, but inaction is the very opposite of itself. It must ever press on, seeking the ocean which it shall never reach.

Perhaps some of these last statements may be so far removed from our common thought as to be to many not merely incredible, but meaningless. That our knowledge of the outward world should be dependent upon our own activity, and yet more directly upon the fact that we have an ideal with which to compare the outward fact, may seem one of the most extravagant utterances of Fichte — one of the most extravagant, because it concerns that which is so familiar in our lives that its extravagance may be distinctly seen, while other statements may have seemed so far away and vague that their extravagance is hardly noticed. We may have attached too little meaning to them to be really surprised by them. So far as the relation of the activity of the I

to the act of perception is concerned, we may perhaps be helped by recognizing the fact that the mind is never passive. We are apt to think of perception as a state of passivity in which the mind is merely acted upon. We often contrast this passive condition of the mind in perception, with its activity in judgment. Even Kant has sometimes been understood to make this distinction. The mind is, however, never more active than in perception. Never does it apply the Categories with more authority, although it applies them unconsciously. By means of the Categories, it makes sensation into perception. It constructs, by the productive imagination, the objects which it sees. Even sensation is not a matter of passivity alone. The mind is constructive even here. The wax is simply receptive when it takes the stamp of the seal. Such passive receptivity is wholly foreign to the mind. That is pure activity. It may shape its activity according to some suggestion from without; but it is active and autonomic still.

Even this result, however, is only a step toward the position of Fichte. According to this, not merely is the mind active in perception. It is by means of the comparison between its own ideal and the objective reality, that this latter becomes an object of consciousness. Let us see whether we can attach any meaning to this statement.

The objector admits that a contrast is necessary in order that anything may be consciously perceived — that what we recognize is relation, and especially

change of relation. But changes of relation, he may urge, are taking place without our act. The world changes about us. First one object of the environment, and then another, affects us. Sounds, colors, forms, are ever varying. The world is a kaleidoscope which is always turning; and the transformations thus produced are sufficient to awaken our consciousness, and to give to it a content, without reference to that ideal which Fichte makes essential to any consciousness of the objective world. I will not undertake to defend or maintain absolutely the position of Fichte, but will simply adduce one or two familiar conceptions, which may point in this direction, and show that the position of Fichte may be less extravagant than it at first appears. I will ask, then, What constitutes for us the reality of the external world? I think that the answer generally, if not universally, given will be that the world has reality to us through our recognition of the principle of Causation. This binds its parts together, and makes it one; and through this unity it is real. Thus Kant claims that the idea of causation cannot be derived from experience, for experience depends upon it. I ask next, What do we mean by causation? The ordinary answer to this question would be that it is a manifestation of force. One object acts upon another and produces some change in its structure or condition. This is what we mean by causation, and this is what we call the manifestation of force. My next question is, How do we obtain the idea of force? The common answer to this

question would be, that we obtain the idea of force through the manifestation of power by ourselves. We are conscious of using energy. We, ourselves, produce change in the objects about us. We do this consciously, and with a purpose. Our consciousness consists in the fact that our purpose is not accomplished merely by a thought — that we have to make an effort, greater or less. This consciousness of effort is what gives us the idea of force, and thus of a causation that is something more than mere sequence, however unvarying the sequence may be. This idea of force we extend to the relation of objects in the outer world, and thus reach the notion of a universe that is bound together by the principle of causation. A further question is, Why do we attempt to make a change in the relation of objects to ourselves and to each other, and thus gain the idea of force, and that of causation? The answer to this question is, that we seek to change the relation of objects because we are not wholly satisfied with them as they are. This dissatisfaction with them as they are, implies the notion of some possible disposition of the objects about us that would please us better than the actual arrangement. We have thus, in some sort, an ideal, to which we seek to make the actual conform. This ideal is, however, so far as we have yet reached, very low and very superficial. Still it is a kind of ideal that is always present with us; and one cannot rest long without being moved by such an ideal to some work of change. These ideals of which I now speak, are low and

superficial, because the suggestion of them comes largely from the world of objects itself. We have little in view save some change in the arrangement of these; and this new arrangement we shall shortly seek to better in some respects. All these lower and superficial ideals point, however, to the ideals which may be absolutely so called — those of truth, goodness, and beauty. These differ from the ideals just described, in that they are wholly of the soul. They correspond to what Fichte calls thetic propositions, in distinction from those that are antithetic and synthetic. Through these, the I seeks to impress itself wholly upon the outward world, to make the outer world wholly conformed to itself. Through these, the I seeks thus complete independence and self-assertion. These, however, are infinite, corresponding to the infinite nature of the I.

It was just stated that the lower and superficial ideals point to these absolute ones. It is because man cannot be satisfied till these higher ideals are fulfilled, that he pursues so restlessly the lower ideals.

> "The fiend that men harries
> Is love of the best."

It is this love of the best which leaves man no peace till the ideal of the best has offered itself to him as the direct object of pursuit. When this has been fairly seen, there comes only with it an inspiration to yet more unwearied activity. The struggle has now a lofty peace which was before lacking, but it allows as little pause.

"The Lethe of Nature
Can't trance him again,
Whose soul sees the perfect
Which his eyes seek in vain."

The course of thought which has thus been followed is designed to lead the common apprehension of the outer world to something more akin to the position of Fichte. We have seen that, even to this common apprehension, the reality of the world is found in that of causation. Causation is another name for force. The idea of force is gained from the consciousness of our own activity in regard to the outward world. This activity grows out of our recognition of its imperfection. This recognition of imperfection springs from the fact that we have an idea of something that seems to us better than the actual, and these lower ideals point to and suggest, if they do not indeed imply, the highest ideals. Thus, it is through our ideals that we reach the recognition of the reality of the external world.

By this reasoning, in which I have assumed certain views to be commonly held, and have not advanced them as those which I should maintain without qualification, we have seen that our recognition of the reality of the external world may be shown to be dependent upon the ideals according to which we shape our action. We may take a step further, and affirm that it is through our own impulse to activity, and thus mediately through the ideal which is the source of this impulse, that we recognize the reality of the objects by which we are directly sur-

rounded. The impulse to activity postulates the reality of the objects upon which we are moved to act. If we were surrounded by what we knew to be phantasms of our own brain, we certainly would not use physical powers to rid ourselves of the annoying presence. We are so constituted as to be ever active. We have ideals which we are impelled to accomplish. In Fichte's very interesting work on the Vocation of Man, and, indeed, in his ethical writings generally, he shows how our belief in the outward world is the postulate of our active impulse. With him, this active impulse assumes the form of the moral sense, and of the categorical imperative which springs from this. Moral action differs from other action, however, simply in its purity. It is the pure activity of the I that is so far independent of any objective environment. This demands a field for itself, and we thus postulate the outward realities.

Yet further it is true that we receive our most vivid, if not, indeed, our only real, notion of the actual existence of the things that surround us, from the resistance which they offer to our attempts to modify them. When we undertake to do this, we are confronted by the unyielding nature of our environment. We are continually finding ourselves face to face with some obstacle which is either immovable or can be moved with difficulty. We can here apply literally Fichte's formula; namely, that only through the ideal do we reach the knowledge *of the real*. Here we see how our purpose outruns

our performance, and thus shows us the limits within which we are confined, which otherwise would not be perceived by us. Thus it is to a sturdy, active nature that the world seems most real. To a dreamy and contemplative nature, content with the inner realm of its own thoughts and fancies, the world might easily seem to be more or less of a dream-world.

By such illustrations we may put a real meaning into the formula of Fichte; namely, that without the ideal there would be no real, as without the real there would be no ideal. We must continually bear in mind the fact that the system of Fichte rests upon this recognition of the essential activity of the nature of the I, and of the dependence of all things upon that. There is no relation recognized by the system, that is static. All is dynamic. All manifests the play of the infinite life, which alone is. At the same time, although Fichte himself uses, to some extent, the kind of illustration just indicated, this does not fairly represent his own inmost thought. Really the only activity of the I, which he recognizes, is that of positing. The only field which is open to our thought, as we study his system, is that of consciousness. The absolute activity of the I is that of self-recognition. This is interrupted by the recognition of that which is not the self. This introduces the antinomy that has followed us through our whole study. The solution of this antinomy is found in making the Not-me, which interrupts self-consciousness, really reflect self-consciousness, by

manifesting the nature of the I — in other words, by making it conform to the ideal of the soul. This can never be perfectly accomplished, for the Not-me, by its very nature, remains the Not-me. The solution of the contradiction may thus, as we have seen, be always approached, but never reached. It is a postulate, not a reality.

Since the I thus demands a result that can never be absolutely accomplished, we find in it rather a tendency than a fulfilment. We find, manifested by it, a striving toward that which cannot be reached. The only relation of the pure activity of the I to any possible object, is, then, a *striving*, and, according to what we have already seen, an infinite striving. This infinite striving is the condition of the possibility of the recognition of the objective world. If there were no striving, there would be no object.

In the thought of Fichte, the two-fold activity of the I, by which alone the object is posited, is of fundamental importance. If the I could, by a simple act, posit the external world, the whole aspect and meaning of life would be different. We should here have the basis of that form of fatalism which may be represented by the system of Spinoza.* This system Fichte considers to have been, before the critical philosophy, the most self-consistent system possible in regard to the human will. According to this, we should recognize in finite beings, no more activity than is manifested by them. There

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 263.

could be no infinite power of activity, because no such pure activity manifests itself. According to this view, finite beings would be wholly finite. They would be, once for all, what they are. They would be wholly dependent upon some power outside of themselves. By this power that is not themselves, they would be fixed within the limits in which they found themselves. This is because they would have no power to enlarge the sphere of their being. They would be surrounded by a single line of limitation. If we recognize, however, as has been done in the discussion that we have just followed, the fact that the positing of its environment by the I is dependent upon its striving to realize something which is as yet, and may always be, beyond its reach; if we realize that without this ideal there would be for us no real; without this striving, no object; the whole aspect of things changes. There is introduced the element of freedom. Freedom becomes, indeed, the basis and the goal of all activity. The limits within which the soul finds itself are no longer, in the strict sense of the term, limits, for it is already beyond them, and is constructing a world for itself in the outlying regions of infinitude.

Such a system of fatalism could only avail in regard to our thought of God — that is, of an infinite being, which would be in absolute accord with itself, whose pure activity would involve the positing of its own being. Such a thought, however, is considered by Fichte to be extravagant and unmeaning, the basis of his whole discussion being the necessity

of this two-fold activity; namely, that of the real and that of the ideal, for any consciousness.

On the other hand, Stoicism, according to Fichte, failed to recognize the limitation of the individual.* Therefore is the Stoic sage complete in himself, and unlimited. All the predicates are ascribed to him that belong to the pure I, or God. According to the ethics of the Stoics, we are not to become like God, but we are God. Stoicism is refuted, by showing that it does not explain the possibility of consciousness. Between these views stands the Science of Knowledge, recognizing, as it does, the two factors of human nature, its infinite being, and its finite existence.

The *striving*, which has been already referred to, is so important to the whole system of Fichte, that it demands a somewhat more careful consideration. This striving involves, by its very nature, a certain contradiction. It is causality which does not attain to causality. If it were not causality, it would produce no effect, even upon the consciousness. It would be nothing. But if it actually attained to causality — that is, if it fulfilled its nature — it would be not a striving, but an accomplishment. We strive to do that which we, at least as yet, find ourselves unable to accomplish. The striving that is here spoken of is absolutely such. It is an infinite striving — that is, it can never become transformed to an accomplishment. That which is the object of

*Sämmtliche Werke, I, 278. Fichte seems not to notice that with *the Stoics, the sage,* like the infinite I, was ideal, not actual.

the effort is infinite. It is thus at every stage of accomplishment which may be attained, infinitely removed from complete satisfaction. This infinite striving is what we have found to be the condition of the positing of the object.

We have thus found that the I has two forms of activity. One we have called infinite, because it is aimed at that which can never be reached. The other we have found to be limited. It is that which we have called the objective activity of the I, because it consists in the positing of the object. It is limited because it is objective, the object in every case forming or implying a limit. The first form of activity, which was just named, should, by its very nature, stand in direct antithesis with this finite activity. If the finite activity is objective, the infinite should have no object. Indeed if it have an object, it cannot be infinite.

We are here met by a contradiction. This infinite striving, which has been spoken of because it is a striving, is related to an object. It seeks to accomplish something, and its object is that which it seeks to accomplish. We have, then, two objective activities, one infinite and the other finite. The very statement is contradictory; for an infinite objective activity is inconceivable. We have, then, to ask, How can we conceive of an infinite objective activity? or, what practically amounts to the same thing, How shall these two objective activities be distinguished from one another?

Our first suggestion in regard to this latter ques-

tion would be that the finite objective activity of the I has to do with the real object, while the infinite striving is directed toward an imaginary object. This is certainly true, but it does not help us. We find ourselves simply in a circle; for if we ask how we shall distinguish from one another the real and the imagined object, we are pointed back to the activities with which each stands related.

If one objective activity is infinite, it must be infinite only in a certain sense, while in another sense it is finite. Further, since the striving has, like the objective activity, an object, the objects must, in the two cases, be of different natures. We find this difference in the fact that the object of the finite activity is absolutely determined. The activity is in turn determined by the object. It is dependent upon it, and limited by it. The ground of the limitation of the objective activity — that is, its object — lies outside of it. This object, because it is thus external and fixed, is called a real object. The infinite striving is not limited in this way. It goes beyond the limit which this object would fix. It does not have to do with the real world which is manifested by some external activity. It has to do with a world such as it would be, if all reality were dependent upon the I. Thus it has to do with an ideal world which is dependent wholly upon the I, and which in no sense manifests the activity of the Not-me. The fixedness of its object, then, distinguishes the objective from the ideal activity.

The striving is, then, finite, so far as it is directed

to an object; for every object implies a limit. It is at the same time infinite; for in the case of the ideal object, the limit is wholly dependent upon the I. The I recognizes no condition, except that it must set a limit somewhere; but it can press this limit into the infinite as it will. The ideal involves, at every moment, a limit; but this limit must change every moment. The absolute striving is infinite; but, as such, it never comes to consciousness; for consciousness implies reflection, and reflection implies determination. So soon as this activity comes to consciousness, it becomes finite. So soon, however, as the spirit discovers that it is finite, it enlarges its bounds; but so soon as it asks whether it is not now, at last, infinite, it becomes finite, and so on forever.

Thus the terms infinite and objective are contradictory. The contradiction cannot be removed, except in a completed eternity. If the object should ever be thus pushed to infinity, it would be no longer an object. The idea of infinitude would be realized, which is a contradiction.

The idea of such an infinity which is to be accomplished by us, does, in spite of its unattainableness, hover before us. It is bound up in our very being. We must solve the contradiction, although we cannot conceive its solution to be possible, and though we foresee that in no moment of eternity can we conceive it to be possible. But this is the stamp which shows our nature to be destined to eternity.*

Thus are the contradictions in the I solved, so far

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 270.

as is possible. The I is infinite, but merely through its striving. If it were not striving — that is, if it had absolute causality — it would be no I; it would be nothing. Did it not have this infinite striving, it could not posit itself; for it could recognize nothing over against itself. In this case, again, it would be no I, and, therefore, it would be nothing. From both these points of view, therefore, this infinite striving is necessary to the very being of the I.

The striving which we have thus considered, implies a resistance. If the I could posit itself absolutely, if it had thus free scope for all its activity, this activity would not be a striving. Our whole discussion involves, then, the idea of something heterogeneous which is found by the I within itself. If found at all, it must be found within the I, because the I cannot go out of itself. Its activity is, however, interrupted; this interruption is recognized; it is ascribed to the Not-me, which the I, therefore, posits. This being so, the I must, in some sense, have left itself open for this invasion. It must, by its very nature, by the primal conditions of its being, have a place for this heterogeneous element. A perfectly smooth and hard ball would give no opportunity for the entrance of any foreign body. It might be broken, but then it would cease to be what it was. The I continues to be an I, and yet finds this foreign element within itself. It must, therefore, of itself furnish the conditions for the entrance of this element. Further, we have seen that by this foreign element, the activity of the I that is pressing

out into the infinite, is deflected, and turned back upon itself. How came the I by this outward-pressing activity? The I is simply self-affirming; this outward activity seems the opposite of self affirmation. What relation has the one aspect of the I to the other? It would seem, at the first glance, that since self-affirmation is the fundamental characteristic of the I, the outward-pressing activity must hold a secondary position — that is, that it must, in some way, be derived from, or involved in, the self-affirmation. This we shall find to be the case.

The I posits itself absolutely. This involves simply a relation to itself. If we think of this relation as an active one, we can say that the direction of the force of the I is inward. In other words, the direction of its force is purely centripetal.* But a centripetal force cannot be conceived of as existing by itself alone. In this case we should have only a mathematical point. If the I had only this direction toward itself, it would be what any lifeless body is. The lifeless bodies outside us we regard as possessing, in some sort, each a relation to itself. Each thus preserves its identity according to the formula, $A=A$. This force by which each is held together is, in some sort, static. There is no action or reaction. In other words, the bodies exist simply for us; they do not exist for themselves. Each is thus lifeless and soulless, and no I. The I must not merely be posited for others; it is posited by and for itself. It must therefore have within

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 273.

itself the principle of life and of consciousness. Therefore the I must have within it a principle of self-reflection. Thus we have to regard the I as existing originally under two relations. It is reflecting and so far the direction of its activity is centripetal. It is, however, not merely reflecting; it reflects itself. It is the object as well as the subject — the material as well as the form of the reflection. So far as it is that which is reflected, the direction of its activity is centrifugal. If its activity were merely centripetal, it would have nothing to reflect. So far, then, as it is self-reflective, the centripetal activity must be complemented by a centrifugal. The I is, however, posited as containing all realities. Thus the centrifugal activity must be supposed to be infinite. These two activities of the I are separated only by our own thought. In themselves they exist as one, or rather they would so exist if this harmony were not in some way broken. Thus, if we should strive to comprehend the divine consciousness, this would be possible only through the assumption that God reflects His own being. In this case, that which is reflected would be all and in all, and that which reflects would be all and in all. The consciousness and the object of consciousness could not be distinguished. Consciousness, however, under such conditions, or under such lack of conditions, is, according to Fichte, not conceivable by us. We have in this illustration only an illustration of the relation of the I to itself,

where the I exists in absolute and uninterrupted completeness, when it would cease to be an I.

But the activity of the I, pressing out, as we have seen, into the infinite, impinges at a certain point, upon a limit. At this point the activity of the I is, in part, reflected. It thus does not fill out the infinite. The demand, however, of the I, that it should fill out infinitude, remains. The question whether this demand is fulfilled, and the discovery that it is not, give the possibility for the distinction between the two directions. Thus the consciousness of the centripetal direction arises only through this interruption, and we can therefore understand why it should be ascribed to some foreign element.

We have thus found how the original striving after absolute causality is derived from the nature of the I itself; namely, from its tendency absolutely to reflect itself. Hence comes the demand for causality in general. To use the figure that we have already adopted, we have seen how the centrifugal activity of the I, and, through this, the possibility of the collision with something that is not itself, are grounded in the nature of the I. Further, the demand of the I to reflect itself, cannot be fulfilled without such interruption. It cannot, indeed, be perfectly fulfilled with it, for the interruption shows that it does not perfectly reflect itself. Its activity has been interrupted; and, so far as it reflects an interrupted activity, it does not perfectly reflect itself. But, on the other hand, this self-reflection cannot really be accomplished in any degree without

an interruption. The self-reflection is only actual when the I *posits itself* as self-reflecting, for in this self-positing is found the reality and fulfilment of the self-reflection. This positing, however, as we have seen, cannot be effected by itself alone. The Me cannot be posited without the Not-me. Thus, in this tendency of the I toward absolute self-reflection, we have the source of the centrifugal activity which gives the possibility to the interruption that has been described; and in the demand for self-reflection, we have the indication of the part which this impinging is to fill in the accomplishing of this result.

We have thus considered in their most general aspects the elements that enter into consciousness, and their relation to one another. We have found, so far as analysis alone can show us, what is the nature and source of the absolute activity of the I. We have found the contradiction that is involved in the demand of the I that it shall posit itself as absolute. This implies a conscious reflection which cannot be accomplished without limitation. This limitation must be imposed upon the I from without, for it is contrary to its nature to limit itself. This limit is found in that impinging which gives occasion to the I for the limitation of itself. This limit is not the reality of what we know as object. Our objective world stands in no relation with it. The I has simply taken occasion from it to construct the objective world.

This limit, which is the real Thing-in-itself,

involves also contradictions. How can it, being foreign to the I, affect it? How can the I obtain any knowledge of its existence? What can there possibly be in common between the two? Further, the necessity of the Thing-in-itself for the conscious self-reflection of the I, is found in the nature of the I. It is assumed only for the sake of the I. We can predicate of it, then, no existence except in relation to the I. The I is forced to recognize it by its thought and for its thought. It is in thought, then, that it is thus recognized. It is thus a thing of thought. In all this we have to do only with the I itself. Thought is within our own mind; and whatever is there, is of the mind as well as for it. If thought, then, is dependent upon the Thing-in-itself, this latter is dependent upon thought. It is assumed as something foreign to the self, but the very assumption makes it a part of the self.

This latter contradiction may be illustrated at greater length. We may assume the notion *A* to be in the mind. This breaks up the absoluteness of the I, and we must seek a cause for this interruption. We find it in *B*. The activity of the I, coming into collision with *B*, is moved to the modified activity which produced *A*. *B* has thus become a thought of the mind, and we must seek in turn for its occasion, which we may call *C*. This process may go on forever. As soon as we think of anything as *extra mentem*, it becomes, by the very act of thinking, *in mente*. The Thing-in-itself is thus everywhere and nowhere. We see it before us; we put

our hand upon it, and it is gone; yet again it stands before us as at the first. On the other hand, if we can never reach it, we can never escape the necessity of assuming it. It must always be recognized as an essential element in the development of any conscious nature.

We here find, in an active form, that contradiction which in a fixed form has been found in Kant. Kant, as we have already seen, while denying the validity of the Category of Causation except as connecting phenomena among themselves, assumes the Thing-in-itself as the ground or cause of phenomena. Fichte recognizes both sides of the contradiction. He sees that the mind goes beyond its right in assuming anything outside itself, yet that it is by its nature forced to do this. He is content to let the matter remain thus, and to find a solution of the antinomy only in a postulate that can never be fully satisfied.

In fact, however, the idea of a limit which may be expanded but not escaped, is carried by Fichte through all his philosophy. The nature of this limit will be discussed later when we come to speak of the ontology of Fichte.

We can now decide more perfectly than before as to the nature of the system of Fichte. As we have already seen, he called it a Critical Idealism. He insists further that it may be called an Ideal Realism or a Real Idealism. In other words, it accepts the fundamental dogma of both realist and idealist. It is realistic in so far as it insists upon

the dependence of the I for self-consciousness upon something foreign to itself. It is idealistic in so far as it recognizes the impossibility of thinking this Thing-in-itself without making it enter into the realm of the mind. It is critical in so far as it recognizes the impossibility of any theoretical solution of this antinomy; and thus, the fact that the only solution must be a practical one.

We can now see also more distinctly than before the inspiration which this system carried with it. Where we begin our career, it tells us, is something wholly beyond our power of determination. We must begin somewhere. We find limits which we must accept. To one they may be narrower, to another vaster. This is not a matter of choice, and thus it is a matter of neither praise nor blame. But while the starting point is thus fixed for each, the path which each will follow through all eternity is subject to his own will. Each is master of himself and thus of his real destiny.

We understand also the place which the Postulate of Morality holds in the system. This is the demand for the absolute independence of the I. It is the demand that all limit should be done away with, and that the absolute nature of the I should be supreme. The demand that the I shall become absolute, is not, it must be noticed, a demand for the independence of the I considered as an individual. Individuality implies limitation. The individual I becomes absolute, only so far as individuality is laid aside. That the I should become absolute, implies that it should

become one with the Absolute. It would then, as we have seen, cease to be an I. The absolute I is a contradiction in terms; it is something that has never been and will never be. It is, however, none the less the ideal which should be the aim and the inspiration of every life, and a life is glad and triumphant as it draws near to this. This approach is indeed in appearance only. The goal flees as we approach it. It is always, and through eternity will always be, infinitely in advance of the most earnest seeker. Yet none the less is every advance a gain. Thus there is open to the soul a career of joy and of victory that shall know no limit.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEDUCTION OF PERCEPTION AND OTHER MENTAL PROCESSES.

WE have now completed the general analysis of the elements that enter into consciousness. It remains to make a more special analysis of the elements and processes that go to make up the concrete states of consciousness. It is important, before entering upon this discussion, to understand precisely what is attempted, and the method by which the results are to be brought about.

Consciousness is taken as a fact. This is given to us by experience. We cannot deduce the fact of consciousness. As Fichte repeatedly says, the impinging upon a limit which makes consciousness possible is something that could not have been foreseen. Consciousness being given, we know that this impinging must have taken place. The manner in which this collision is inferred in order that consciousness may be possible, illustrates the general method which we have to follow. Repeatedly Fichte justifies a result in the body of his argument, by urging that without it the unity of consciousness could not exist. Consciousness is thus his only and absolute datum. We are justified in assuming any faculty or any process which may be seen to be involved in this.

It will be noticed that our proceeding is to be scientific rather than philosophical. By this I do not refer to any accuracy in result — for this is to be determined as we advance — but simply to the nature of the assumptions made. We shall not attempt to show the necessity of these assumptions by any deductive process, based upon the nature of the soul or any fundamental idea. We recognize the fact of consciousness, and ask how we can suppose it to have been produced. I have called the method scientific. It may be illustrated by the course adopted by Darwin for working out and defending his theory of Development by Natural Selection. An animal is found possessing a certain organ; how is this organ produced? Objectors point to the intricate structure, and challenge the naturalist to show how it could possibly be produced by the process of natural selection. The defender of the theory shows how the organ might have been produced. He describes conditions which may have existed; influences that may have been at work; a series of changes that may have taken place. Granting these, we can understand how the structure may have been formed. All this, the objector says, is a matter of supposition; it cannot be proved that these conditions existed, or that this chain of transformations was accomplished. This proof is not needed. We have the result which is beyond question. The naturalist is sure that it has been produced by purely natural causes. He has shown the possibility of *conditions* which would bring about the end. He is

sure that either these or others similar to them must have existed, for a result exists that can be explained only in this way. So Fichte, starting with consciousness as given, seeks to show the process and the powers by which it is produced. He is sure that the content of consciousness is not given by anything outside the mind. He is justified, then, in assuming within the mind anything that is needed to produce consciousness, and to give to it its content.

What has been said is as important in its negative as in its positive aspect. It shows what we are not to expect, as well as what we are to expect. We may miss the evolution of all these processes and conditions out of some principle in which they are involved. We may miss the dialectic movement that has been so striking in much of the discussion which we have followed. It is important, therefore, to know precisely what is to be accomplished.

It should be added that we shall here meet other examples of the mechanical form of presentation which, as we have before seen, sometimes, with Fichte, takes the place of a purely abstract treatment. Our methods and results are thus largely figurative.

I. PERCEPTION.

The materials that we have for developing the special elements of consciousness are the same that we have found at every stage of our discussion. We have the pure activity of the I pressing forth into

the infinite. This, as we have seen, impinges upon some sort of limit, and is, in part, reflected back toward its source. Let us suppose this activity to start from A. which may represent the inmost being of the I, and to meet the obstacle at C.* It might meet it at a greater or less distance from A, but we will consider it to be at C. From C the portion of the activity which we are considering, is reflected back to A, while a part keeps on its original course. The I is still, in some sense, absolute. Its force cannot be taken from it, nor even can the direction of its activity be permanently disturbed. The activity which is reflected from C to A is reflected back, therefore, from A toward C. Since, however, it is the tendency of the I to reflect upon itself and all its doing, it reflects spontaneously the activity which we have just seen reflected from A to C, back again to A. We may, perhaps, make the discussion of these rather complicated movements more easy by giving special designations to each of the lines of movement that have been enumerated. We will call the first movement of the activity from A to C, a. The first reflected movement from the obstruction at C back to A, we will call c. The reflection from A to C, we will call a^2; and the second movement back to A, the result of the spontaneous activity of the I, we will call c^2.

It is obvious that a^2 will meet c, and will move, therefore, against an opposing tendency. It will keep on its way in spite of c, until it is reflected

*Fichte's Sämmtliche Werke, I, 227, et seq.

back to A. This meeting of a^2 with c forms the great central point of interest. It is here that consciousness begins. The I is unconscious of c, for this movement has taken place simply as a recoil from the obstruction at C. On the other hand, c^2 is the voluntary act of the I, and is, therefore, present to consciousness. Through it, c will become present to consciousness, but not as if it formed a part of the I. The movement of c is in the direction from externality. It is thus met by a^2, and since it is, as we have seen, unconscious action, it is regarded as representing the Not-me.

It will thus be noticed that it is not the obstruction at C which is represented under the form of the Not-me. This we have seen before, but the present statement may make it more clear. All the elements contained in consciousness are the various forms of the activity of the I. The system is so far purely idealistic, the only hint of realism being the obstruction at C, which forms, as we have already seen, a vanishing factor in the history of the I. We see also, already, how the idea of the Not-me can have arisen in the mind, the returning activity, c, being mistaken for a foreign presence.

We will now consider more carefully what takes place at the meeting of a^2 with c.

As we have seen, c is regarded as the Not-me, and a^2 represents the Me. We have before seen the difficulty that arises when we try to understand how it is possible to conceive of the Me and the Not-me, or of either of them. We saw that neither can be

regarded as anything but the antithesis of the other. Neither has, then, any significance apart from the other, and thus neither can be thought of alone. On the other hand, they cannot be thought of together, for they are mutually exclusive. We saw further that the difficulty was removed by the suggestion that the imagination broadens the line of separation in which both meet, in such a way as to make it an object of contemplation. Thus, in this fictitiously broadened line, the two may be regarded as if coexistent, and thus the thought of them is possible. In this statement the Me and the Not-me must not be regarded as extending before the consciousness, side by side, and contemplated by the imagination in the suppositiously broadened boundary line. Each excludes the other. The boundary line is, therefore, not like that between two planes, but like that between two moments. One succeeds the other in the consciousness, and all that was said of the limit must be understood applied to the relation of succession.

How shall we understand this succession as taking place? It cannot be once for all, because the Me and the Not-me are apparently permanently together in our consciousness. It cannot be, therefore, merely the single succession of the Me to the Not-me, or the reverse, because this would be once for all, and the permanent result would be lost. It must, then, be a series of mutual successions. One of the elements must constantly give place to the other. This *change* must take place with the utmost rapidity,

otherwise the aspect of permanence would be lost. The result may be compared to the ring of light which is produced by the rapid movement, in a circle, of the glowing point of a rod of heated iron. In the case of the Me and the Not-me, the permanence and coexistence of the two may be called a visual illusion of the same kind.

The active power in this process is the imagination. This vibrates with inconceivable rapidity from the Me to the Not-me, and back again to the Me. This is the primitive function of the imagination. It is the first stage of the process through which the objective world is constructed by it. This function of the imagination is presented by Fichte under various forms. Besides that just given, it is sometimes regarded as marking the relation between the infinite and the finite forms of the I. Especially does it mark the process by which the I advances, through the removal of the limit, which is, however, at once succeeded by another. The imagination takes the limit into itself, sees it as within the I, not without — as belonging to the Me rather than to the Not-me. No sooner is this done than the Not-me, under the form of a limitation, meets it again. This vibration of the imagination, Fichte regards as furnishing the basis for the notion of time; namely, the succession of instants, each being without duration.

We have seen that a^2, moving toward C, meets c and advances under this opposition until, as c^2, it is reflected back to A. We have thus two movements in the same direction; namely,

c and c^2. The question meets us, How are these to be distinguished? We have, before, marked lines of activity by their direction; but here the direction of both is the same, and yet each is to be distinguished from the other. Why do they not flow together and become one movement? Let us illustrate the matter in a still more materialistic manner. Suppose that we have two streams of water flowing in the same channel and in the same direction, how will it be possible to discover that we have two currents instead of one, and to distinguish which belongs to each? Let us suppose that one of the currents becomes frozen as soon as it reaches our point of observation, and is carried forward as ice. In this case we could distinguish very easily between the two streams.

Something like this is what, in the thought of Fichte, happens to c. This, proceeding from C, and thus apparently representing the external world, is regarded, as we have seen, as the Not-me; while a^2 is seen to be purely subjective. The imagination, shaping out of c^2 the form of objectivity, vibrates, as we have seen, between the Me and the Not-me. Everything is thus changeful and fluctuating. That anything should become permanent, the product of the imagination needs to be discriminated and fixed. The discrimination is the work of the reason; the medium for the fixation is the understanding.

The use of the term, understanding, in this connection seems to be very little in accord with the ordinary definition of it by psychologists; it may,

however, be not wholly foreign to the use of the word in common speech. It may represent the common sense that holds fast to the reality of things, regarding the world as a solid fact; and that brings new phenomena into relation with this real world, solidifying and crystallizing all into one permanent whole. The name of the faculty would seem to imply some such meaning as this. It is that which stands under and forms the basis of the world which we create, while we believe that it is a world which we have found.*

We have thus indicated the nature of perception. We have seen a^2 meet c. This is the activity of the I meeting what it regards as the Not-me. The imagination hovers between the two, until this process ceases because the results of the imagination have become fixed in the understanding. Then c^2, in the form of this solidified result, is borne back to A. Thus we see that c represents the object of perception, while a^2 and c^2 represent the conscious elements of perception.

At the meeting of a^2 and c, we have at first a conflict of activities. These are in equipoise, for, as we have seen, c^2 is reflected back *spontaneously* by the I. This collision, in which neither element yields to the other, suggests to the consciousness the element of matter which enters into perception. Matter, according to Fichte, is precisely this equipoise between conflicting forces. This, as well as the results of the productive imagination, is fixed

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 233.

in the understanding. The one, matter, is the fixation of that hovering of the imagination which we have already described as taking place between the Me and the Not-me; while the other is the fixation of the results of its productive activity. Thus is seen the whole work of the imagination in perception. The pause in its vibration, leaving the opposing forces in equipoise, furnishes the basis or material of the objects of perception, while its productive activity gives to them their form.

We have now, even at the cost of some repetition, to make more distinct the manner in which the objects of perception obtain the appearance of externality. All that we have seen has taken place within the mind itself. It is, however, regarded as opening to the thought a world which lies outside of the mind.

To assist in this, we must return to the two forms of the activity of the I. The one is, as we have seen, unlimited; the other is limited, or objective. Both of these belong to the I; the I is one. How, then, shall we find any relation between these two that shall not introduce discord into the I itself? In the act of perception we suppose a pure activity outside the I and opposed to its activity. We have in this the relating element that we need. So far as we regard the activity of the I as not limited by this outer activity, it is pure. So far as we regard it as limited by this outer activity, it is objective.* Thus we think of each in relation to this, and the discord between the two is removed. It is *c* that

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 337 (Grundriss, etc.).

represents to the mind this outer activity. The whole process of the reflection of c is unconscious. Its results are found by us, and we think that they are produced for us rather than by us. We thus regard them as representing something foreign; and the activity which they represent is excluded from the mind. Here, then, something separates itself from the I as if belonging to another world.*

By an addition to these various forms of reflection which perhaps were already sufficiently intricate, Fichte supposes a part of the activity of the I to press beyond C, and not to be reflected except in a philosophic reflection.† This suggests a perception that is not perceived, a vague and undefined "somewhat" that we regard as the Thing-in-itself, and upon which we believe the forms perceived at the meeting point of a^2 and c to be dependent.

We have seen that the material basis of the objects of perception, the substance of which they consist, represents the mutual neutralization of the activities that we have called c and a^2 respectively, in regard to which the vibration or hovering of the imagination has ceased, and the result of which is preserved in the understanding. The subjective condition corresponding to this is sensation. This implies something given. In other words, it is accompanied by a feeling of restraint. A sensation is produced necessarily, and we cannot escape from it. It is, however, something within ourselves. It represents, from the inside, the meeting of the

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 339, 320. † Same, I, 235.

opposed activities. It is thus the most general subjective condition of perception, just as matter, that has already been described, may be regarded as the most general objective condition.

We have already found the two forms of the activity of the *ego* — the absolute or free, on the one side, and the objective or limited, on the other — to enter into all the processes which we have considered. They must be blended in the act of perception. They are, by their very nature, opposed; and yet they must be united by some form of synthesis. The free activity of the I is directed toward itself, the objective toward that which is not itself. The first form of activity is, then, wholly inward and self-affecting; this implies freedom. The other has reference to the external, and implies constraint. Freedom and constraint, then, are to be united. This can only be done by an act through which the inner yields itself freely to the influence of the outer. The relation between this constraint and this freedom is thus illustrated; the spontaneous reflection can only take place on condition of an impinging upon something foreign, but it is not obliged to reflect even under this condition. Thus freedom and necessity are blended in every act of complete and conscious perception.

We thus see that perception consists of a twofold relation of activity and passivity.* Both the subject and the object must be both active and passive. So far as the subject is active, the object is

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 229 et seq.

passive. So far as the object is active, the subject is passive.

We are here, it should be remarked, taking perception for what it offers itself, involving a real subject and a real object. The object is passive so far as it is an object; it is active so far as it affects the subject. The subject is active so far as attention is turned toward the object, and so far as the object is made, apparently, the bearer of subjective conditions; and passive so far as it is affected by the object.

II. THOUGHT.

We have now to consider further these two, the object and the subject, in their relation to one another. Each of them possesses two activities: the one directed toward itself, by which it is what it is, or by which it maintains itself as it is; the other directed from itself, by which it affects others. Since consciousness is one, all the elements that enter into it must be united by mutual determination; otherwise diversity and discord would be introduced, and the unity of consciousness destroyed. The elements that thus enter into consciousness are the subject and the object, each with its double activity.

The activity of the I which is directed toward itself, is its absolute activity, that by which it affirms itself. The objective activity of the I is determined by the absolute activity, because upon this depend all the activities of the I. On the other hand, in the act of perception the self-affection must be seen

to conform to the nature of the object. We have thus the subject rounded into a distinct whole. It goes out from itself and it returns to itself. It is thus self-related as well as related to an object.

The same relation is found to exist between the activity and the passivity of the object. That, too, is found to have a relation to itself — otherwise it would not be an object — and on this depends the activity which brings it into relation with the subject. It affects the subject as what it is.

The subject and the object thus stand over against one another, each a complete whole, and each standing in relation with the other. The process of discrimination which we have thus described is what we know as Thought. It is the primal act of thought, that which is the condition of all other thinking. The perceiver determines himself to think an object. So far as the object is determined through this act of thinking, is the object thought.*

We have seen that the object is, by this process of thought, regarded as having a relation to itself; that is, as being a distinct object conforming to the formula, $A=A$. It thus determines itself to its relation to the subject. It is thus regarded as giving rise to an activity which affects the subject. If there were no passivity in the perceiver, we should have no right to assume the unity of the object, and the activity that proceeds from it; on the other hand, if there were no such activity of the

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 240.

object, there would be no passivity of the subject. The object is thus thought of as the cause of the passivity of the subject; and the passivity of the subject is regarded as the effect of this inner activity of the object. This inner activity of the object is merely something that is thought. It has no other reality. If, therefore, we give to it, as we cannot help doing, an outer substratum, this we call a Noumenon.

III. THE POWER OF JUDGMENT, AND ITS RELATION TO THE UNDERSTANDING.

The object of perception which, as we have seen, is separated from the perceiver and rounded into a distinct whole, must be further discriminated. There must be a *definite* object of perception. An object becomes thus definite only as it is distinguished from something else. This power of distinction possessed by the subject depends upon a certain freedom of activity. The objective activity of the I is determined by an activity which is more general — which, while it is aimed at an object in general, is aimed at no object in particular. The activity of the subject may thus be directed toward either A or $-A$. This activity is thus free, either to reflect A, abstracting it from $-A$, or the reverse.* Such an activity hovers between A and $-A$, just as the imagination hovers, as we have seen, between the Me and the Not-me. Since there must, however, be a distinct object of thought, either A or

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 241.

$-A$ becomes fixed as such. As, however, we have found that the limit between the Me and the Not-me is broadened and preserved in such a manner that the Me and the Not-me may be seen in their relation to one another, so in this case, although A instead of $-A$, has been made an object of thought; or the reverse, each is still seen in relation to the other. A, for instance, if it is the one chosen, is not seen merely as A, but as A over against $-A$. On the other hand, while A is thought, $-A$, from which we have abstracted, is considered over against A as merely thinkable; thus A and $-A$ are blended in a new view, according to which each is determined by the other. This power of blending A and $-A$ in a relationship in which each is determined by the other, and in which the nature of the relation depends upon the fact that one has been selected to be thought, and the other, by abstraction, left as merely thinkable, is called the power of judgment. In other words, an act of judgment always implies a selection — something is affirmed over against something that is denied. Both that which is affirmed and that which is denied are by the very act of affirmation and denial seen in relation to one another. The affirmation and denial are, indeed, only different sides of the same act.

We have now to consider the relation of the power of judgment to the understanding. It will be remembered that the understanding, with Fichte, is that common sense which takes the creations of the *imagination* as real; in which the Not-me has

become fixed in relation to the Me, and which is thus the subjective substratum of the objective world.

From what has been said, it follows that the judgment and the understanding are mutually dependent upon one another. The judgment affirms A or $-A$ in relation to material that is already embodied in the solid world of the understanding. A judgment is represented by a proposition, and the proposition may serve to illustrate the point that is before us at present. The subject of the proposition is something that is accepted as real. We hesitate which predicate to apply to it. This hesitation is what Fichte describes as the hovering or vibrating of the judgment between two possibilities. As soon as the judgment is fairly determined, then the grammatical subject takes, in connection with the predicate that is now associated with it, the place in the world of the understanding which it formerly occupied by itself. We recognize, for instance, the reality of John, but we doubt whether he is an American or an Englishman. After some hesitation, we settle it that he is an Englishman. Henceforth the Englishman, John, is as real a part of our world as John was before we knew his nationality. It is in this way that the world of the understanding is built up. It is continually becoming enlarged by the results of fresh judgments. On the other hand, the judgment presupposes the world of the understanding. If there were no grammatical subject, there could be no predicate, and

the subject exists in that solid world of fact from which we start in our reasoning. Thus without the understanding the judgment would be impossible, and without the judgment there would be no understanding. The two are thus mutually dependent.

IV. THE REASON.

The thinker stands in the same relation to the thinkable, that the perceiver stands in to the perceivable. So far as the thinker considers anything to be thinkable, the thinkable is passive. On the other hand, the thinkable is such by its own nature, and thus the thinker is *forced* to regard it as such; so far the thinker is passive. We have not found, therefore, any absolute ground of determination. We do not know on which side is the initiative. We still move in a circle. From one element we are driven back to the other. We need to find a point of absolute departure. We need, therefore, to take a step further in order to bring out, in its most simple form, the relation which we are studying.

The power to abstract from any particular object implies the power to abstract from all objects. This power must be perceived, or must in some way be brought to consciousness. The imagination hovers between object and no object. It is fixed to have no object. That is, the imagination, which is regarded as the creator of the objects that fill our *consciousness*, is wholly suppressed; and this sup-

pression, this non-existence of the imagination, becomes itself the object of a vague consciousness. The dim notion that we have, when for the sake of pure thought we try to abstract from all mingling of the imagination, is something that is not unfamiliar to the thinker. This product must be fixed, like all others, in the understanding. But it is nothing. It is no object, and, therefore, it cannot be thus fixed. This may be illustrated by the vague thought of a relation which is considered without regard to any real or possible members of the relation. There remains, thus, only the bare law of the reason which demands this perfect abstraction — a law that can never be perfectly fulfilled, so far as any distinct consciousness is concerned. This power of perfect abstraction is what we mean by reason.

V. THE HIGHEST ACT OF ABSTRACTION, AND THE FINAL RELATION OF THE NOT-ME TO THE I.

When everything else is removed, the I at least remains. We here meet the I and the Not-me in their most abstract relation and contrast. Each is what the other is not. If the I determines only itself, it determines nothing outside itself; if it determines anything outside itself, it does not determine itself. We now see that the I is that which remains after every object has been removed through the power of absolute abstraction; and the Not-me is that from which we abstract in order to reach the Me.

We have thus reached the source of self-con-

sciousness, which, when thus recognized, can never be mistaken. Everything from which I can make abstraction, everything that I can exclude from my thought, is not myself; and I contrast it with myself precisely through this, that I regard it as something that I can exclude from my thought. It is not necessary that all the elements of the Not-me should be together excluded from my thought. At one moment I may exclude *A*, *B* still affecting my consciousness; at another moment I may exclude *B*, *A* still remaining; through these acts both *A* and *B* are as truly shown to belong to the Not-me, and thus to be foreign to myself, as if they had been together excluded by a single mental act. The more any individual can thus separate from himself, the nearer does his empirical consciousness approach pure consciousness. The process begins with the child, who for the first time leaves his cradle, and thereby learns that the cradle is not a part of himself; and the process continues till we reach the position of the transcendental philosopher, who at last faces the problem of thinking the pure self.

The fact that the I is that from which nothing further can be abstracted, is the reason why the I is regarded as a unit.

We have thus the I, representing that from which nothing further can be abstracted; and we have the Not-me, representing all from which it is possible to abstract. These two stand each over against the other. They stand in relation to one *another*, because the one is the antithesis of the

other. One must determine the other; that is, there must be some relation of dependence by which one of the two is bound to the other. This is obvious from the fact that whatever we dwell upon to the exclusion of something else is seen in relation to that which is excluded, and that every affirmation involves such exclusion. This principle holds good in the relation between the Me and the Not-me, even in the extreme result of abstraction which we are here considering. There is seen, even here, to be a relation between the two; and, since relation implies some form of dependence, one of these elements must be dependent upon the other.

This dependence cannot, as was the case in the forms of the relation which we have heretofore studied, be mutual, for each is, by the process of abstraction, separated from the other. They touch only at a single point, namely, that of their antithetical or exclusive relation to one another. There is, therefore, no circle as before. There is dependence, but not mutual dependence. The one that determines the other must remain absolutely undetermined.

If we fix our thought upon the I, to the exclusion of the Not-me, the I will seem to contain all reality. Its opposite is nothing positive; it is merely the Not-me. Thus the Not-me is wholly determined by the I, which is in no respect determined by it. If we make the Not-me our positive element, then the I will be simply its negation. The I will be wholly determined by it, and will not, in any degree, determine

it. Thus each is regarded as infinite, according to our point of view. The antithesis which has followed us thus far assumes, then, this form, that if the one is infinite, the other is finite, and the reverse.

This antithesis is, according to Fichte, the source of the antinomies of Kant.* These antinomies represent the strife between the reason and the understanding. The world of the understanding is, in one aspect, too large for the reason, and that of the reason too small for the understanding. In other words, the reason represents the I as laying down the law for the universe. The understanding recognizes the universe as rebelling against this law. The reason demands limit, in order that the universe may be a whole, and thus of such a nature that it can conform to its ideal. The understanding, on the other hand, regards the universe as endless, as by no possibility forming a whole, and thus as by no possibility embodying an ideal. In the one case, the universe is infinite; in the other, the I is infinite.

We may find another illustration which is helpful, if not quite so complete as that which we have considered, in the familiar, but always striking, passage of Kant in which he compares the starry heavens above and the moral law within. When he looks upon the heavens, the universe seems to stretch into infinitude, while man and the world upon which he finds himself seem to shrink into nothingness. When, on the other hand, he looks

*Sämmtliche Werke, I, 246.

within, and recognizes the sublimity of the moral law, he feels himself to be the member of a spiritual universe, compared with which the physical universe is as nothing.

We may illustrate this principle still further, by the statement of Herbert Spencer, at the close of his First Principles, which has already been referred to in another connection: "Manifestly," he says, "the establishment of correlation and equivalence between the forces of the outer and the inner worlds, may be used to assimilate either to the other, according as we set out with one or other term."

When, however, we remember that the I is the absolute determining power, that there is nothing within the bounds of its knowledge that does not exist for it, that the material world exists for it and only in its consciousness, and that from this world of consciousness there is no escape, we see that the dilemma which we have been contemplating can be determined in only one way. We see that the I stands in relation only with itself, and is one with itself. This is a position from which no merely theoretical philosophy can escape. A practical philosophy may bring us into relation with spiritual realms, which transcend our single lives; but whether we use the methods of the theoretical or the practical reason, we are alike freed from any subjection to the material universe, considered only as such.

CHAPTER X.

DEDUCTION OF THE WORLD OF OBJECTS, AND ITS RELATION TO THE ACTIVITY OF THE I.

WE have thus examined the phenomena of perception. We have traced the steps by which the object and the subject become discriminated from one another, and the varying relations in which they stand to one another. The treatment has been large and general. We have the outline of a world, but not the world. We have *the thing*, as such; we have not *things*. We have now to examine the process by which the objective world is broken up into the world of objects.

I. THE LONGING FOR CHANGE.

We must turn back for a moment to the consideration of the tendency which we have found to exist in the I to an infinite activity, which, failing of its end, is reflected back upon itself. It has failed of its original end; therefore, it is a striving, and not causation. The I, however, tends not merely to activity in relation to the external world; it has also an impulse to reflection — that is, to self-consciousness. This fact opens another field for the energy that fails to reach its original goal. It cannot be wholly lost. If it cannot manifest itself

outwardly, it may and must manifest itself inwardly.

Suppose two elastic balls* to be pressed together. Each strives to fill itself out to its true form, but each is resisted by the other. If the resisting force of either is increased, the force of the other is relatively weakened, and the first invades the limits of the other to a greater extent than it is invaded by that. If the two forces are in equilibrium, the impression produced upon the one is precisely similar to that produced upon the other. We have here the relation of the Me and the Not-me as it appears at the first glance. We have in each ball an activity that fails of its end. We have thus in each a striving such as we found in the I. But now comes the great difference which we have elsewhere recognized. The lifeless body has no causality except outside itself. If this causality fails, it fails altogether. The I, on the other hand, has also a causality in relation to itself. Its nature is to posit itself, to reflect upon itself. The activity, then, which fails to produce the outward result, produces an inner result. If it cannot produce an act, it must produce a feeling. We thus see the absolute antithesis between nature and spirit. There is a hiatus between the two; we pass from one to the other by no transition — only by a leap.†

We have now to ask, What is the nature of the feeling that is thus produced? That of which the I is conscious in this feeling, is itself. This is obvi-

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 292. † Same, I, 298.

ous from the nature of all feeling. It is the nature of the I to be both subject and object. However the fact may be concealed by the appearance of externality in any object of consciousness, the I can, in reality, have no object but itself. In the case before us, this semblance of objectivity does not exist. The I is conscious of itself as itself. It is conscious of its own striving toward an end which cannot be accomplished. This striving is something which is bound up in the very nature of the I. It is the impulse that represents its essential activity. This activity is one which has no complete object, but yet is irresistibly driven to pursue an object.* The I cannot fully picture to itself this object, and thus recognize it under its perfect ideal form. The pressure of this inward force, so far as its origin and its end are concerned, is thus unconscious, but it manifests itself to consciousness in its actual existence. The feeling which corresponds to this striving is that of longing. By longing is meant an impulse toward something imperfectly known; an impulse which reveals itself by a sense of need, by a dissatisfaction, by an emptiness that demands satisfaction and knows not whence this satisfaction may be procured.

If the activity of the I were not restrained, we should have no longing, but we should have causality. On the other hand, if the I were not conscious of this sense of longing, it would not feel itself to be limited. It is through this, therefore, that we arrive at the idea of an external world. In

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 302.

longing there is a sense of limitation which, it is believed, must have its ground in the Not-me. The object of the longing—that which the striving would accomplish if it could—we call the ideal. That which stands in the way of the fulfilment of this, we call the real. As we have before seen, each of these is brought to consciousness through the other.

II. THE OBJECTIVE WORLD.

We have now to ask, What is the result of the ideal activity of the I which is manifested through the longing which we are considering?

The longing of the I looks for some result in the real world; reality manifests itself to the I only through a feeling; thus the longing is directed toward a feeling. The I has already a feeling which we will call X. The feeling X is not the longed-for feeling; if it were, the I would not feel itself limited, and would not be conscious of a longing; indeed, would not be conscious of itself at all, for consciousness springs only from the sense of limit. The desired feeling is just the opposite of X, namely $-X$. The object which corresponds to the feeling X we will call x; that which must be present if the feeling $-X$ shall exist, we will call $-x$. The conscious aim of the I is to replace x by $-x$. Now could the object x be itself felt, it would be sufficient to replace it by the object $-x$, which it might perhaps be easy to do. But this is impossible, because the I never feels an object, but only itself. It can produce the object only through ideal activ-

ity, that is, by a process of thought. On the other hand, if the I could produce in itself the feeling $-X$, then it would be able to compare the feelings with one another, to note their differences, and to represent them in objects which should be considered the ground of each respectively. But the I cannot directly excite any feeling in itself. If it could do this, it would have a power of causation which is foreign to its nature.

The two feelings, X and $-X$, are wholly opposed. Through the one, the I feels itself bound; through the other, it seeks to escape from the bondage. Through the one feeling, that of limit, the I has reached to the knowledge of itself. It has in thought determined and circumscribed itself. In this act of reflection it is absolutely self-determining.

Against this sense of limit the tendency to outward activity and enlargement is directed. This tendency is an impulse toward modification. It would modify something that is outside the I, and that is recognized through the sense of limit, and through feeling in general. This tendency is opposed by the object upon which it would act. The activity of the object is independent of the I and its longings. It goes its own way, and follows its own laws, just as the I takes its course and is governed by its laws. This opposition makes it impossible for the longing perfectly to fulfil itself. It cannot affect the object as it would; or at least it *cannot* affect it in the degree in which it would.

We have that sense of limitation that has been so often referred to.

It must be noticed, however, that this limitation is not regarded as springing from the fact of a material universe. It is not the external reality, as such, that restrains the activity of the I. This material element cannot be done away with. If it were removed, the equipoise would be disturbed, and the I, losing all power of reflection, would cease to be an I. It is not the fact, but the form of this material element, which the longing would have changed. If the world could be somewhat differently arranged, we feel that we should be satisfied. A readjustment is all that we desire.

III. THE WORLD OF OBJECTS.

In order that this desire for readjustment may exist, we need to recognize about us not merely an objective world, but a world of objects. The environment must be broken up into distinct things. These things and their rearrangement or reconstruction can alone offer a field for the activity of the I. We must now see how we reach the idea of this world of objects.

In entering upon this discussion it must be remembered that with Fichte these separate objects do not really represent separate things. We have only the world of thought and the world of feeling. It is from the world of feeling that the ideal activity of the I, under the form of the productive imagination, constructs the objective world. We have

further to recognize the fact that, though terms are often used by Fichte that would imply a real change in the objective world — and, indeed, such language cannot be avoided — yet really the only world with which we have to do is that of consciousness. The only activity of the I is ideal activity. What the I determines, it determines in its thought. It must think the Me according to the law of its own thought. It must think the Not-me according to the same law.

We have first to notice how the I thinks itself. When the I beholds itself, it does not seek to modify itself. It has a concept of itself which it regards as true. It has a real image of the self which it regards. The self which it beholds it finds to be both the determiner and the determined. It is what it is through its own nature. It is, therefore, an individual, and distinct from all else. This individual it calls the I.

When it turns to the external world, it would stand in the same relation to it as to itself. It would see it as it is. It would simply perceive. In this act of perception it would, further, apply the same standard which it applied to the contemplation of itself. It would find in the Not-me the same characteristic which it found in itself, and which was essential to this inner perception. The external object must also be an individual. It, too, must be at once determiner and determined. In other words, it also must be what it is, from its own nature. It must be what it is because it is what it

is. Whatever, in any object, is not the effect of itself is regarded as caused by something else. We do not regard this as belonging to the thing, but ascribe it to something foreign. That which, in any process, determines without being determined, we call a cause. That which is determined merely, is the effect. Only that which stands in relation with itself, as at once cause and effect, do we call a thing. This standard of reality is taken thus from the I, and extended to external objects.

Thus do we find in the I itself an *a priori* law by which it ascribes a unity and simplicity to every object of its contemplation. We find this law illustrated even in the simplest sensations which form the ground of all our perceptions. Sweet or bitter, red or yellow, each is identical with itself; each is a single sensation differing from all others, and not to be resolved into any others.

The question may arise, How, in the light of what has been said, is the I to be distinguished from the Not-me? Each is, in the sense that has been described, *causa sui*, and is thereby an individual. The difference is that the I has the power of self-reflection. When it thinks of itself, it is subject and object alike. When it thinks of the Not-me, it is the subject only. The Not-me can never be subject; it is always object. Thus it is that the I and the Not-me are absolutely distinguished from one another.

It has been stated that the I perceives itself as both the determiner and the determined. This,

taken absolutely, is rather an ideal than a fact. Practically, it finds that this self-determination is limited. There is a point where it is itself determined from without. It finds within itself an effect of which it is not the cause. This effect it ascribes to something foreign to itself. The subjective becomes changed to the objective.

This change of the subjective to the objective may be illustrated by the simplest sensations. What we call sweet or sour, red or yellow, no one will deny to be purely subjective. We can only say, I have such or such a sensation. But others claim also to have the sensation of sweet or sour, and the rest. Since each appeals only to his own feeling, how do we know that the sensations are similar? How do we know that sugar produces a like taste in all? We associate the sugar with a fixed taste which is purely subjective, but which, by this determination, we have made objective. In other words, we give objective validity to our subjective sensation. What is an accident of ourselves, we make into an accident of a thing which lies outside ourselves.

We thus reach, from a different point of view, the idea of matter, which serves us as a substratum upon which may be overlaid our sensations, as we, in the manner described, give to them an existence *extra mentem*. That matter is a creation of our own thought might have been suspected from the fact that we make no other use of it than that which has been described. If it is anything really

outside of us, we should come to the knowledge of it by some one of the senses. But the senses give us merely subjective sensation. This matter is neither seen, nor tasted, nor smelled. Some one unused to abstract thought may suggest that it is known to us by the sense of touch, through the resistance that it offers. But this resistance is merely a sense of inability that is purely subjective. Touch, in general, reaches only to the surface of a body, and gives us a sense of roughness or smoothness, of cold or warmth, and the like. Why do we extend the cold or warmth over the whole surface, and, especially, why do we extend it in our thought to the interior of the body which is unapproachable by us? All this shows that what we call matter is the product of the imagination. Yet we consider it something wholly external, and with right, because all agree in the recognition of it, and the production of it takes place according to a universal law of reason.

Both the facts which we have considered unite to make of the I an individual. If it were not self-determining, it would not be an individual, for it would have no being of its own. If it were absolutely self-determining, it would not be an individual, but would be infinite.

We have now to turn to the world of objects, and apply to this the principles which we have applied to the I. We have seen that the object must be self-determining; but for it, also, this self-determination must not be absolute. It also must

have a limit, or it would not be an object. We have now to see how the perception of this limit is reached.

The I contemplates an object, *X*, or, in the phrase of Fichte, it determines it ideally. The I is, however, by its nature, self-conscious, and must, therefore, contemplate its own act. This is not possible without breaking off from the contemplation of *X*, for the reason that its activity cannot be directed upon more than one thing at once. In reflecting upon itself, then, the I breaks off from its determination of *X*. This it does with absolute spontaneity, but, at the same time, with absolute unconsciousness. From this act comes the appearance of a limit to the object. By the law of its nature, the I must thus break off from its determination of *X;* but no law prescribes to it the point at which it shall break off. *X* may extend to *B* or to *C*. We will say that the act of the I in relation to it is broken off at *C*. *X* seems, therefore, to be limited at *C;* or the I seems to be determined by it, or to be impressed by its special nature. The breaking off was a free act on the part of the I, and, if it had been conscious of its act, this limit would be considered accidental in regard to itself. As it is, it is considered a matter of chance in regard to the object. It is regarded as accidentally limited by some other object, which is as yet unknown to us. We see here how the unconscious act of freedom on the part of the subject gives rise to the recognition of what we call the accident of the object. The limit at *C* is merely felt, and not

perceived. As we have seen, however, the I freely posits this limit, and what is thus posited must be a matter of perception and not of feeling. There is, however, no relation between feeling and perception. Perception sees, but it is merely empty and formal. Feeling is related to reality, but it is blind. Yet the two must be united by some form of synthesis. In other words, the I must limit X freely, but in such a way that X shall seem limited by itself. This is done by the positing over against X, at the point C, another object, which we will call Y; this Y must, in its turn, be self-dependent and self-determining; that is, it must be a thing. It must limit X, and be limited by it. Each is thus affected by the other. We cannot think of the two, however, as if they were one, for their relation to one another is merely partial and superficial. Every point of X stands in relation with every other point of X. This is also true in the case of Y. But not every point of Y stands in relation with every point of X; and the reverse. X and Y must mutually exclude one another, while they yet stand in relation to one another.

IV. SPACE.

In what has been said, X and Y have been considered merely as objects. They have been regarded as intensive, not as extensive. Each is simply what the other is not. We may regard them, however, as standing to one another often in certain outward relations.* These we will now consider. We will

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 391, et seq. (Grundriss, etc.).

regard them, so far as they are objects of perception, in space and time. Here, as before, we find that the peculiar characteristics of X are not due to Y, and the reverse. They simply serve to make perception possible, by means of the distinction of one from the other. The perception of X is, in some way, dependent upon that of Y. All the relation that we suppose to exist between them is that of mutual exclusion. There must, however, be for both some sort of determination, by which they can stand to one another in the relation described. This cannot be the result of the inner nature of these objects, for each, as we have seen, is wholly dependent upon the other. It must, therefore, be merely external. It is not posited by any perception of the I, for it is the condition of all perception. For the sake of convenience, we will designate this condition of perception as S. We will call the manner in which X is related to S, x; and that by which Y is related to S, we will call y. Y, as we have seen, is posited in order to make the perception of X possible, through limitation. X is thus, in some sense, conditioned by Y. The relation, however, is merely one of negation. It is of this nature: Y, being united to S by y, X is excluded from y. Further, because Y limits X, X will begin where Y ceases. Thus, there is an unbroken continuity. This exclusion, and this continuity, are not possible, unless both X and Y are in some sphere which is common to both. The condition, S, may be regarded as representing this sphere. S must be of such a nature that the free activity of

the objects is undisturbed by it, and yet each must be synthetically united with it. S can, therefore, have no power, no activity; otherwise it would, by action and reaction, interfere with the free working of the object. Activity, however, is the mark of reality. S, therefore, can have no reality. It is nothing. As Y is not affected by y, so is y in no sense a product of the activity of Y. The one stands only in a synthetic relation with the other; therefore we can, in our thought, distinguish one from the other. By this synthesis X is, however, excluded from y; therefore is y the sphere of the activity of Y. From all that has been said, it will appear that y is only this sphere, that is, that it has no other reality, and no other attribute than that which we have seen. It is simply that the activity of Y excludes from y all activity but its own. We have seen that the activity of X is excluded from y by Y; we have seen further that the activity of X is not affected by that of Y; therefore, X can have no tendency to occupy y. If it had such a tendency, the exclusion would limit its freedom. Thus X and Y have merely an accidental and external relation.

In all this the I has been regarded as purely passive. The I, however, must have freedom of determination. The I could posit other objects in x and y as well as X and Y. In the sphere y, it could posit A and B, and make y the sphere of the activity of both; or, in place of A, it could posit E and D, and so on forever. Whatever it posits, the spheres of these objects must be mutually limiting. All these

spheres must, therefore, be continuous. All this must be really posited by the imagination. *S* is thus posited as extended, continuous, and infinitely divisible, and is space.

Since the imagination can posit the possibility of other objects, with other spheres of activity, in the space *x* or *y*, it separates space from the objects that fill it, and gives thus the idea of empty space. This, however, is merely in passing from one content to another. There is absolutely no empty space, except so far as it is suggested by this transition.

If we leave out of the account the qualities of things which appeal to the feeling alone, and which cannot be made objects of thought — as that they are sour or sweet, heavy or light, etc.— things are wholly indistinguishable, except through the space that they occupy. Therefore, that which so pertains to things that it is ascribed to them — and not, like sensations, to the I — but which does not belong to their inner essence, is the space which they occupy.

All space is, however, alike, and there is no distinction possible, except under the condition that already a thing — namely, *Y*— is posited in a certain place, and that, therefore, we are forced to say of *X* that it is in a different place. All space distinctions imply space already filled. Place *A* in the infinite empty space, and you cannot answer the question where it is; for you have no point of measurement or departure. *A* could move ceaselessly in space, without our perceiving it. But as soon as *B* is placed in the neighborhood of *A*, we have some

starting point. We can say of either that it is near the other. In making this point of departure, we are absolutely free. We can say that A is near B, or that B is near A. As soon as we have fixed one point, we must estimate others according to it; but the act of selection is wholly arbitrary. Further, the selection once made, is not necessarily fixed. We may now make X at x our point of departure, and at another time Y at y.

V. TIME.

From this it will appear that, so far as the relations of space are concerned, there is nothing absolute or permanent. All is left to caprice, and to a caprice that may continually change. No relation can thus be fixed between the Me and the Not-me. All is shifting and uncertain. We need another form of relation, according to which this fluctuation is impossible. The I may still be free to connect what object it will with any given point, but its selection once made, it must abide by it.

This form of relation is what we know as time. In time there is this mingled freedom and constraint. We may put what content we will into any moment, but the content once put into it is there forever. Let e be one point in time; we may put into it the content X. This content is purely accidental, so far as this point is concerned. It might have been Y, or any other content, but once given, it cannot be changed. There remains now the point f. Its content is open to the caprice of the

I. It has, however, a fixed relation to *e* and its content. Suppose *Y* to be the content of *f*; *f* and *Y* are determined by *e* and *X*. It is as when we start from one point in space; all other points and their contents stand in relation to it. They are this side or that, above or below, far or near. The difference is that, as we have seen, in space these relations are fluctuating, we may change them at any moment. In regard to time we cannot do this. The moment and its content pass at once out of our hands; and the next must of necessity be seen in relation to it.

We can thus have no present without a past. We may illustrate this by a feeling that we sometimes have when suddenly awaking from a deep slumber. The sense of time seems for a moment gone. We are as if in a timeless world. We are starting afresh in the process that has just been described.

There is for us, says Fichte, no past except so far as it is thought in the present. What was yesterday (for we cannot express ourselves without using the language of common life) is not. It is only as far as, in the present moment, we think that it was yesterday. The question whether there is then really such a thing as past time, is like the question whether there is a Thing-in-itself. There is certainly a past time when we posit it; and when we raise the question, we do posit it. When we do not posit it, we no longer propose the question; and then for us there is no past time. There is, however, necessarily a past for us; for only under this condi-

tion is there, as we have seen, a present; and only under condition of a present is consciousness possible.

Two things are needed for consciousness; namely, a sense of fixedness and that of freedom; for consciousness is only possible through contrast, and this contrast demands something fixed and something changeable. The perception B is no perception, if another — namely, A — be not assumed. Now if A should disappear, and the I should go forward to the consciousness of C, B must at least remain as its condition; and so on forever. Upon this principle depends the identity of consciousness, for which, strictly speaking, only two moments are needed. There is no first moment of consciousness, only a second.

A fixed quantity of space coexists; a quantity of time exists in succession; therefore, we can only measure the one through the other. We measure space by the time which it takes to traverse it; and time by the space which we or any regularly moving body, the sun or the hand of the clock, can traverse in it.

VI. THE NATURE OF THE CHANGE DESIRED.

We will now return to the consideration of that longing which is the basis of our present discussion. The longing aims at something different from what is. This implies some degree of recognition of what is; for the desire of change presupposes some idea of that from which we wish to escape. The question

now is whether the condition will occur under which alone a feeling different from that already existing may take place. It must; for without such change the I would feel nothing definite, which is the same as to say that it would feel nothing, and that indeed it would not be an I.*

It will be seen that Fichte here, as elsewhere, appeals to the necessity of consciousness. Whatever is required for it must be assumed to exist. No suggestion is made as to the manner in which this fact of change, that had before seemed so impossible, is produced. It must be, or there could be no consciousness; therefore it is.

The desire for change implies that the feeling which is longed for must be contrasted with that existing. The I, however, cannot have two feelings at the same time. The present feeling is felt as such; the other, the longed-for feeling, must be recognized by the ideal power — that is, by thought. Thought, however, cannot take the place of any feeling, nor produce one. It can only regard the feeling negatively. Thus, who can say what we mean by sweet? We can describe it only negatively. It is not this, and it is not that. What it is, we must know by sensation, and can only reproduce it dimly and negatively by the imagination.

The question now meets us, How shall the fact of change be recognized? It is known by a sense of satisfaction which appears to the intellect under the form of self-congratulation.

*Sämmtliche Werke, I, 321.

We have, in what follows, an explanation of the longing for change, which is very important in the study of the thought of Fichte. We have before seen that the I in contemplating the object applies the same test that it applies in thinking. The object, like the subject, must be a unit; therefore, it must be limited. X can only be really limited when it has given place to Y. So long as we contemplate X alone, the longing grows out of the impossibility of determination, owing to lack of limit. So soon as the other feeling arises, the limiting of X is possible, and really occurs.

This result cannot be recognized without a comparison with the former condition. The former feeling is therefore regarded with dissatisfaction, which is the contrary of the self-congratulation which the present state excites. Not every longing is accompanied with dissatisfaction; but when its result has been realized, the former state is regarded as having been unsatisfactory.

The feeling of self-congratulation is, however, only transient. The nature of the I involves the longing which has been described. This implies restlessness and lack of permanent satisfaction. One longs ever for change. When the change is reached, for the moment there is relief; but the old restlessness soon awakes again, and we long as earnestly as before for something different from the present.

The terms in which this reasoning is expressed are often so similar to those used to express other forms of thought, that we need to pause in order to

make clear the course that we have followed, and the conclusion that has been reached. This can only be done at the cost of some repetition.

As has been often stated, the activity of the I is regarded by Fichte as purely ideal. It is an activity of consciousness. Through the whole discussion we have to do with nothing except consciousness, and the content of consciousness. The demand of the I is for completeness in every object of its contemplation. It contemplates itself, and demands completeness here. It demands that the I should be absolutely self-determining; or, as we may express the same thing, that the Me should be equal to the I. This is impossible, from the very nature of things; for, should this absoluteness be reached, there would be neither I nor Me. It, however, never can be reached; for an eternal progress is necessary for this result. Thus we have that longing which has been described, so far as this relates to the demand for absoluteness on the part of the I.

This longing is manifested more definitely when it is considered in relation to the objects that fill the consciousness. It is these that prevent the I from that absolute self-assertion which it demands; and they do this because they do not adapt themselves to its needs. Because the I demands totality for itself, it demands totality for its object; for only by possessing this will the object be its mirror. Totality in the object is, however, as impossible as totality in the Me. In order that an object should be indeed an object of consciousness, it must, as we have seen,

possess two characteristics. It must be self-identical, and it must be limited. This limit must arise from some other object with which it stands in contrast. We have thus repeated the antinomy which met us in regard to the I. As there can be no Me without a Not-me, and as this renders the absolute self-assertion of the I impossible, so there can be no *X* without a Not-*X;* and as the Not-me cannot be merely a Not-me, but must be something in particular, namely *X*, so the Not-*X* cannot be merely a Not-*X*, it must be a *Y*. With *Y*, however, the same difficulty occurs as with *X*. In order that it may be a *Y*, this needs a Not-*Y*, namely, a *Z;* and so on forever. Thus there is always incompleteness in the Not-me, just as there is always incompleteness in the Me. Indeed, the incompleteness of the Not-me is the cause of the incompleteness of the Me.

The position of Fichte is so different from that ordinarily taken, that it is almost impossible to use terms that may not convey a false impression. What has been said might easily be understood as applying to what would be ordinarily recognized as purely theoretical relations. It may, indeed, be illustrated by the pursuit of completeness by science. Science must see *A* as conditioned by *B*, and *B* by *C*, and so on forever; thus science has an endless quest for a result which it is constantly approaching, but which it can never reach. Fichte, however, refers primarily to what we regard as the real and practical relations of life. He refers to the attempt to reach completeness and satisfaction in

the relations in which we are placed, or in those which we create; only it must be remembered that with Fichte the objects that enter into these relationships are themselves only in and for the consciousness. We seem to ourselves to be changing things that are outside ourselves; really there is no change save in our own feelings.

VII. THE LONGING FOR HARMONY AND COMPLETENESS.

We can thus understand, in its full sweep, the longing which fills so large a place in the system of Fichte. It is the demand for perfection. By perfection is meant wholeness or completeness. The I will itself be absolute, but it finds itself limited by the Not-me. It seeks to gratify itself by turning toward this. It will become absolute by making the Not-me the image of that absoluteness which it demands. Here it is thwarted as before. Within and without there is incompleteness. None the less does the I seek ever to accomplish the result for which it yearns; and in this striving, as we have already seen, it finds the foreshadowing of its own endless career.

The more definite form under which the ideal perfection may be imaged, is that of harmony. In order that there may be harmony, two elements must exist, and each of these must have a certain completeness and unity. Each must be free; that is, each must be self-determined. Each, also, must determine and be determined by the other. This tendency of each of the two elements to absolute

determination — that is, to determine itself and the other also — may be obviously the source of discord. We have often conflict instead of harmony.

If, however, the perfect result could be reached, we should have harmony. *X* and *Y* would be perfectly fitted to one another; each would be conditioned by the other, and only by this. Thus, since *X* would be conditioned by *Y*, and *Y* by *X*, our quest would be at an end. No further *Z* would be required. This, in a purely theoretical aspect, is what science is striving to accomplish. It would attain to the idea of a cosmos in which all the elements are mutually determining. This is the end which, practically, we seek in life. We demand that each of the elements that enter into it should be complemental to all the rest, so that we should have nothing further to wish for.

VIII. THE ABSOLUTE HARMONY; THE MORAL LAW AND ITS CONTENT.

The fundamental discord that needs to be solved is that between the impulse, or longing, on the one hand, and the act by which it seeks to express itself, upon the other. The highest manifestation of this tendency to activity is that in which the impulse is to no special thing for any promised gain, but merely for its own sake. It is a striving that has no other end than itself; an absolute striving. This is what Kant described as the Categorical Imperative. It is an absolute law, an absolute *must*. Such a demand is, as has often been urged, wholly unde-

termined and vague. It is easy to say, Thou must; it is not so easy to say what must be done. The command is without reason and without content. On the other hand, the highest form of action, being that which is for its own sake, is an act of perfect freedom. The whole reason for the act lies in the act itself. It is easy to see how such activity must be wholly undetermined and vague. Absolute freedom implies subjection to no reason. The act must furnish its own object, which is meaningless.

We have, then, these two over against each other: on the one side, absolute law; on the other, an absolutely free activity. Each is, by its very nature, undetermined. The law commands without reason or end. Freedom performs without submitting to the imposition of any reason or end. In this contrast we find brought face to face the most sublime elements of the nature; but they stand over against one another with apparently no point of contact. Yet each must give to the other that determination which it needs. Thus alone will each lose its vagueness, and receive some definite significance. So far as this is done will the nature be at peace. In the first place, the act must be perfectly free; for it is perfect freedom that we are considering. Being free, it can regard itself either as determined through that striving of the nature which is expressed by the Categorical Imperative or as opposed to it. The question that now meets us is, How shall this harmony or discord be manifested? In the second place, if the harmony is to be com-

plete, the striving must have the appearance of being determined by the act; and the question meets us, How shall this result be accomplished?

In the I, no two opposites can coexist. The impulse and the act are here opposed. When the act is to begin, the impulse is interrupted or limited. From this arises a feeling. The act freely directs itself toward the possible ground of this feeling, posits such a ground, and realizes it. If the act is found to be in accordance with the impulse — that is, if a sense of harmony is produced — then we know what was the object of the impulse; namely, the impulse aimed at the act which has been performed. Henceforth, the command has a meaning, a definiteness, which before was lacking. To express the same thought in more familiar speech, according to the doctrine of intuitive morals, we recognize a vague but absolute command to do what is right. If we ask for a reason, the answer is, Because it is right. If we ask what we are to do, the answer is, Do what is right. We are free to seek to conform to this command or not. We at first are not sure what the law requires. After acts have been performed, however, we find that some were in conformity with the law, and that some were not. Indeed, it is possible that in this way first do we learn that there is a law. If we have done what the law forbids, we have the reproach of conscience, which reveals to us the fact that we have done wrong. If our act is in conformity to the law, we have a sense of peace, which perhaps is the first intimation that we have done

right. Thus it is the act that has given a content to the law, while it was freely seeking to conform itself to the law. Thus, the problem that seemed to admit of no solution is solved. The law, through the act itself, determines the act. The act is now known to be right or wrong, through the evidence which its very existence has brought with it; and henceforth, all similar acts are either commanded or forbidden. Thus the act has determined the law, by giving to it a definite content. Freedom has not been violated, because the law first determined the act after its commission. The absoluteness of the law has not been violated, for it was by its spontaneous and unreasoned judgment that it pronounced the act right or wrong.

We have thus expressed, in its highest form, the possibility of perfect harmony in the nature, and the goal toward which the infinite striving of the nature tends. We cannot, indeed, consciously work toward an end which is infinitely removed. We can, however, move step by step in the direction toward which that would call us.* Doing this, we tread a path which law and act, working in the manner that has been described, are forming for us as we advance.

* Sämmtliche Werke, IV (Sittenlehre), 150.

CHAPTER XI.

TRANSITION TO ONTOLOGY.

WE have thus considered Fichte's earliest statement of his philosophy. It is, for the most part, concerned with psychological studies. It analyzes consciousness, and constructs a phenomenology of the human spirit. The problems, which, as we have seen, presented themselves in relation to the system of Kant, are, to a large extent, solved. The Categories and the faculties of the mind are shown in their organic relations to one another, and to the mind itself. The theoretical and the practical reason are also seen in their relation to one another. Each is seen to be dependent upon the other; thus the three absolutes which Fichte found in Kant, namely, the Practical Reason, the Theoretical Reason, and the Principle of Unity,—the supernatural element which manifests itself in both—are reduced to one. The I itself, with its infinite possibilities, is the supernatural element in which the theoretical and the practical reason coexist in an organic relation to one another. The Thing-in-itself is put at least in a somewhat clearer light. The contradiction, which was latent in the system of Kant, has at least been brought to consciousness. Kant, by a

seeming oversight, applied, contrary to his fundamental principle, the Category of Causation to a thing outside the mind, upon which the objective world, created by the mind itself, had a certain dependence. Fichte makes clear the contradiction involved in this process, while he denies that Kant was guilty of the inconsequence. He shows, however, that this is an inconsequence that we cannot help committing. The difficulty that admits of no theoretical solution he solves practically. At least, he cuts the knot which he cannot untie. He believes that he has found the nature of the Categorical Imperative, and the ground of its absoluteness. It is the infinite nature of the I, asserting itself, and seeking to make itself wholly free of the limits by which it is confined. So far as these results are concerned, we are wholly within the sphere of Kant's system. Indeed, Fichte regards his own system as furnishing in some sort the prolegomena to that of Kant. He leaves the student where Kant may take him up.*

In all this there appear, however, indications of another side to the system of Fichte. We have only a psychology; but this, when we examine it closely, appears to involve an ontology. Difficulties still meet us, which could hardly have escaped the keen vision of Fichte. There are obvious contradictions. There is, in many aspects of the system, an incompleteness, which, it would seem, Fichte himself must have felt.

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 411.

One difficulty that strikes every reader is the seeming solitariness of the I. We have been studying a single individual. We have had no hint of any reason why we should recognize other individuals, or of the relation in which we might stand to them. The world of men would seem to be, like the world of things, the creation of the productive imagination. At the same time, Fichte speaks, as a matter of course, of other individuals,* thus showing that he recognized this world of men, of which his system itself would tell us nothing. Here, certainly, is a point that needs explanation.

The relation of the self-assertion of the I to the Categorical Imperative is one in regard to which some mighty assumption must have been made by Fichte, of which he has given us no hint. Kuno Fischer emphasizes what has been called the Faust-like and Titanic character of the I of Fichte.† The cry of Faust was, "If ever I lay myself quietly upon a bed of rest, it will be all over with me." So might the I speak, in the system that we are studying. Its very being is in its activity. Titan-like, it would scale the heavens; it would become infinite. This gives us a sense of awe, as if we were in the presence of some tremendous force of nature. With Fichte, however, the thought of this Titanic struggle suggests something more than awe. It calls for reverence. It manifests the loftiest ethical aspira-

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 122 (Grundlage): Nur dass eines Jeden Ich selbst die einzige höchste Substanz ist.

† Fischer: Geschichte der Neuen Philosophie, zweite Auflage, V, 491.

tion. It stands for the moral law itself. Surely, Fichte must have had something in his thought, which he has not yet told us.

The solution of the problem concerning the Thing-in-itself is certainly very unsatisfactory. It is unsatisfactory in the same sense as is the statement last referred to, in that it gives us the feeling that the whole story is not yet told. Here, too, Fichte would seem to have had a background, or basis, for his thought. He tells us that this unknown something, against which the activity of the I impinges, may be only a limit. In fact, it is as a mere limit that this something is all along regarded. In his paper upon The Ground of Our Faith in a Divine Government of the World, Fichte states that these limits are, so far as their origin is concerned, indeed incomprehensible. "But what does this concern thee?" says the practical philosophy; "the meaning of them is the clearest and the most certain thing that there is; they form thy special place in the moral ordering of the world."* This definite and confident speaking of what was at first spoken of so vaguely, shows that the whole matter was, from the beginning, much more clearly mapped out in the thought of Fichte than might appear from his language.

The System of Ethics† published in 1798 — and thus included in the period of Fichte's life at Jena, and in what is known as his earlier period — brings

* Sämmtliche Werke, V, 184, et seq.

† *Das System* der Sittenlehre, Sämmtliche Werke, IV.

us some steps nearer to the Ontology. It does this simply by presenting in a sharper contradiction the elements that have already seemed so discordant. This work, so far as its relation to the philosophy of Fichte is concerned, covers ground which had been, in part, occupied by his treatise on Natural Rights.* The work begins with a fresh analysis of consciousness. We are told that the I perceives itself only under the form of will. There are but two elements of our inner life; namely, consciousness and will. This being so, there remains as the object of consciousness only the will. The I, then, is intellectual; the Me represents the act of willing. Although we recognize the I and the Me as one, we cannot unite them in a single thought. Each is precisely what the other is not. They are antithetical, and we cannot reconcile them so that they shall become one. The real self is an *X*.† It is the unknown and unthinkable somewhat that manifests itself in both the theoretical and practical reason, in the I and the Me. The I, however, as we have said, finds the Me represented by volition. We therefore assume that the nature itself consists of will. By will, is here meant what we have before known as the longing, or the activity, which constitutes the nature of the I.

We now see how we arrive at this conception. But how do we know that this idea is not a delusion? Other things that make up the world of

* Grundlage des Naturrechts, Sämmtliche Werke, III.
† Sämmtliche Werke, IV, 42.

objects, we know, are not that for which they would pass themselves. How do we know that this perception of the self, as will, is not also delusive? This is something that we cannot know. There is no reason that we can give why, so far as our being is concerned, there may not be an unknown background of the reality, which is something wholly different from the will. Fichte here lays down the somewhat startling proposition that we stop with the will, because we will to do so;* that this practical activity really constitutes our nature, is a matter of faith. This faith we accept by an act of voluntary determination. This position Herbart refers to as taking all rational basis from the system of Fichte. It is, however, only the extreme application of the same principle that has been accepted by Fichte, as it was accepted by Kant, as the solvent of all ultimate difficulties. It is the principle of the Postulate. The practical aspect of life is seen to be so imperative that we postulate whatever is needed for its realization. This principle is here carried so far that the absoluteness of this practical element of life is itself postulated. It is felt that no other view of life would be worthy of the grandeur which, we feel, must belong to it. Therefore, we determine that we will accept this, and abide by it.

In the treatise on Ethics, and especially in that on Natural Rights,† the deduction of the outer world is more fully carried out than in the earlier work; though what is stated in these is in accord with the

* Sämmtliche Werke, IV, 26 and 53-4. † Same III, 23-85.

views before expressed. As we postulate, on the one side, the active element of life as constituting its essence, so, on the other side, we postulate whatever is needed to make this activity real. This activity tends to causation; therefore we must assume an outer material world upon which it can act. Further, this activity is the living according to reason. Reason, however, is impossible to the subject, unless it has already found not merely reality, but rationality, outside itself. Through rationality in the object, does the subject itself reach rationality. Thus we must assume rational beings as existing around us. Again, in order to act upon the outer world, we must have an instrument that is identified in a special manner with ourselves. We thus postulate an articulated body.

We have thus reached the basis upon which rests our faith in the external world. This basis is that impulse to activity which has before been identified with the moral law. We assume the existence of a world of persons and things outside of us in order that the impulse of duty may be fulfilled. Duty is thus the one reality upon which all else depends.*

It is from these considerations that Fichte, by a change of phrase, speaks of duty as the Thing-in-itself.

Hegel compares the process of construction which we have thus considered, to the method adopted by Natural Theology. In this, each thing is considered

* Sämmtliche Werke, V, 211.

in reference to some special end, which is, for the most part, directly or indirectly related to human well-being. In another connection Hegel satirizes this method in Natural Theology, by saying that if the vine is made that man may have wine, the cork tree exists that he may have corks for his wine bottles. The point of Hegel's criticism in both cases is the clumsy and piecemeal character of the work. Each thing is taken by itself, and finds its relation to the universe to consist in some special aptitude to meet some special need. There is no sweep of one grand movement of deduction in which each has its place, no organic unity resting upon some universal principle. Such simplicity and organic unity is the aim of the system of Hegel. In comparison with this, the method of Fichte seemed to consist in the use of one makeshift after another.

We now meet a turn in the thought of Fichte more sudden and startling than any which has yet presented itself. It is, indeed, the turning point of his system, and thus the real transition to his Ontology. To make this clear, we must return for a moment to our central principle. The end of our being is complete independence. The I tends to assert itself absolutely. This self-assertion is the substance of duty itself. It is also that which we mean by reason. The I alone is to be the subject of this independence; thus the impulse is a striving after I-hood. Now it lies in the nature of I-hood that every I must be an individual; the requirement, however, is for individuality in general. It is not

necessary that I-hood should be represented by this individual or that — by *A*, *B*, or *C*. It must be represented by an individual, but by no individual in particular. So far as I-hood is concerned, it is perfectly indifferent that I, the individual *A*. am *A* rather than *B*. The absolute independence of *A*, therefore — that is, of myself as *A* — is a matter of indifference. Absolute rationality, absolute I-hood, is our final goal, but not rationality and I-hood as connected with any particular individual. Thus I myself, considered as an individual, am not the end in which the impulse of duty is to be fulfilled. I am but an instrument for this end. My striving after self-assertion is only the method by which the absolute demand for I-hood, or independence, is accomplishing itself. Before, we regarded the body as the instrument for the attainment of the independence of the I. Now, we see that the whole individual is this instrument. We have thus separated the individual and empirical I from the pure I, or from I-hood in general.*

The impulse to the fulfilling of I-hood, or of perfect independence, is equivalent to the demand of the moral law or rationality. I demand morality — that is to say, rationality or independence — absolutely. Whether this end is reached within me, or outside of me, is a matter of indifference. The end of my being is accomplished as truly when others act morally, as when I act morally.

Elsewhere in the same treatise, The System of

*Sämmtliche Werke, IV, 231.

Ethics, Fichte speaks of the end toward which the impulse to independence is ever working, as the complete annihilation of the individual, and its absorption into the pure form of rationality, or into God.* But, though this is the final goal of finite reason, it is a goal that can never become actually reached.

The apparent contradiction which is here uttered is nothing new to us. We have traced this from the very beginning of the development of the system of Fichte. We found it in the fact that the assertion of its independence by the I, is made synonymous with duty. It shows itself in the fact that the pursuit of independence is called the living according to reason. We here find only the climax of the contradiction, when it is openly stated that the end of self-assertion is self-effacement.

We may now see how mistaken is the impression which one would receive from a superficial examination of these earlier statements of the system of Fichte. We might, at the first glance, suspect that his eagerness for independence sprang from the influence received by him in his youth, from the French Revolution. We have seen how far the independence of which Fichte speaks, is from the Revolutionists' dream of liberty. It is an independence that is one with self-surrender. The individuality with which we start becomes transformed to a universality in which all have their place. We have thus the indications of a philos-

* Sittenlehre, Sämmtliche Werke, IV, 151.

ophy of religion that has not as yet been fully stated.

It is now possible to understand better than before what Fichte means by the infinite I. To do this perfectly, it is necessary to compare the statements which he makes in different connections. Earlier, we have found him affirming that the limited I and the infinite I should be one. Later, in a letter to Jacobi, Fichte affirms that the infinite I is not the individual, but that the individual I should be deduced from the absolute.*

One of the most instructive passages on this subject is the following:

"The object of the moral law, that in which it can alone find its goal set forth, is nothing individual. It is reason in general. The moral law has, in a certain sense, itself for its object. I, as an intelligence, place this reason outside of me. The whole community of reasonable beings outside of me is its manifestation. This exclusion of the absolute reason from myself is the act of the moral law, considered as a theoretical principle. This exclusion of the pure I from myself must then be insisted upon in the system of ethics; therefore the empirical I or the individual I will alone be called I." †

* "My absolute I is obviously not the individual. So have angry courtiers and disgusted philosophers explained me, in order to fasten upon me the shameful doctrine of a practical egoism. But the individual must be deduced from the absolute I. This deduction the Science of Knowledge will soon accomplish in the system of rights."—Fichte's Leben, etc., II, 166.

† Sämmtliche Werke, IV, 254-5.

The absolute reason and the pure I are here identified. This, by whichever term we name it, is placed outside of myself, and is manifested by all men taken together, *except myself*. Our first thought would, perhaps, be that the universal reason is regarded as having broken itself up into individuals, all of whom manifest it more perfectly than any one can do. The pure reason would be then behind all and in all. This cannot be the meaning; for why should I, as an individual, not be included in this manifestation? We remember that the individual who speaks—thus representing *any* individual—was himself the one in whom, as he believed, the absolute thought was more nearly uttered than it had been by anyone before or beside him. Why is not he a part of this manifestation? One is tempted further, in a vague and general way, to regard this pure reason, or pure I, as God. This cannot be, for if anything is maintained from first to last by Fichte, it is the doctrine that an infinite I is a contradiction in terms. The infinite I is the goal of my being, a goal that it can never reach; it is in no sense the source of my being. Holding fast to this principle, we find a meaning in the passage: "The goal of my activity is, by the moral law, placed outside of me. I am to live not for myself, but for others." We now understand why, for each, the manifestation of this pure reason, or this pure I, is found in all men but himself. Duty requires that he should forget himself. We can now understand, *also*, the difference between this statement and the

earlier. When our business was psychological, we recognized the power of the pure I in the thrusting aside of all limit. The ideal was as if within us, longing to be fulfilled. Now that our business is ethical, we regard the ideal as outside of us, summoning us to its accomplishment. Both forms of statement mean the same thing, only each regards it from a different point of view. For, according to the former point of view, the term I could be used vaguely and indifferently to cover either or both forms of the I; according to the latter, the I is regarded as the individual seeking that universal element which is its true self, as if it were something foreign to itself.

The development, by Fichte, of his Philosophy of Religion, or, what is the same thing, of his Ontology, is very gradual. In these earlier works we have only hints of it. In his impassioned utterance in regard to the Dignity of Man,* which was delivered about the time of the publication of the first statement of his system, Fichte shows that he has such a philosophy, though he gives little indication of its real nature. The utterance is an exaltation of the individual man. It concludes, however, with the statement that all individuals are included in the one great unity of the pure spirit. In a note, he guards against confounding this view with that of Spinoza. The unity of the pure spirit, he says, is, with him, an unattainable ideal. In the passage from the System of Ethics to which reference has

* Sämmtliche Werke, I, 412, et seq.

already been made, some light is thrown upon the expression, Unity of the Spirit. The unity of the spirit will be reached when all individuals are lost in God; but this can only be at the end of an eternal progress. Unity of the spirit is then oneness with God. We can now understand how the position of Fichte differs at this point from that of Spinoza. With Spinoza, all beings are one with God; with Fichte, they tend to become so.

In his article on The Ground of Our Faith in a Divine Government of the World,* and in the publications in which he defended this, Fichte takes a step forward in the development of his Philosophy of Religion. God, we are here told, is the moral ordering of the universe.† This is a phrase which is naturally misunderstood. Not only our common habit of thought, but even the system of Kant, tends to suggest a false explanation of it. By a moral ordering of the universe we might naturally understand that relation of things by which, in Kant's phrase, happiness is made proportionate to well-doing. It would be, then, an ordering by which poetic justice is rendered to all; the wicked are punished, and the good rewarded. Nothing could be farther from the thought of Fichte. With him, morality is severed from all that is foreign to it. It is not designed to minister to happiness. It is its own end; and everything must minister to it. By the moral ordering of the universe, Fichte means the fact that morality constitutes the essence of the

* Sämmtliche Werke, V. † Same, V, 186, 261.

universe. He means that the moral impulse forms the very substance of our own nature, and that it shapes for us the external world; that all without us is the postulate of duty, and that all within us is the impulse of duty. That power which works in all toward the accomplishment of the highest demand of duty is what he here calls God. God is the power in us that makes for righteousness. That mighty impulse by which all are borne on toward this common end is the power and the presence of God. He constitutes the whole of this mighty movement, as we constitute, each in his place, a part of it.* Religion that contains anything foreign to this element of duty is superstition. Fichte makes light of the common arguments for the divine existence. He mocks at those who base their faith upon the fact that the world ministers to the happiness of man. "Yes," he cries, "keep on, pious soul, tasting how sweet are these grapes and how spicy this apple, that you may learn to prize aright the goodness of God! Poor, perhaps well meaning, but blind babbler, all the pleasantness that is scattered through your sensuous existence is not there that you may brood piously over it; but that your strength may be increased, animated, exalted, in order that you may joyfully perform the work of God on earth." †

Other forms of argument for the divine existence fare no better at his hands. He urges that, if the world is a real and solid fact, it is, once for all, what it is, and needs no explanation, and admits of none.

* Sämmtliche Werke, V, 261. † Same, V, 221.

If, on the other hand, the world is, as the idealist believes, not an external, solid fact, but the product of the imagination, then there is left no place for reasoning, based on the idea of its creation.* The failure of these arguments need, however, cause no uneasiness to the devout mind. He who has once felt the impulse of the moral life, which is the life of God in the soul, needs no argument to prove the reality of the Divine Being. He is as sure of it as he is of his own consciousness.†

The thought of Fichte in regard to the being of God differed from that ordinarily held, as widely as the ground upon which he believed in the divine reality differed from that upon which this faith is ordinarily based. We have only two schemata, or forms of conception and representation of reality. We conceive of reality, either under the form of activity, or that of extended matter. We can think of God only under the form of activity. Such words as substance and being, belong under the second of the schemata. Both are abstractions from the experience of material things.‡ We cannot, then, in strictness, speak, as I have just spoken, of the Divine Being. In the phrase of the schoolmen, God is *actus purus*.§

He denies consciousness to God; but, when he does this he means, he tells us, "our own consciousness, such consciousness as we can understand." Materially speaking, if we may express the incomprehensi-

* Sämmtliche Werke, V. 179–80. † Same, V, 210–11. ‡ Same, V, 259–60.
§ Same, V, 261.

ble in such manner as is possible to us, the divinity must be affirmed to be pure consciousness. It is intelligence, pure intelligence, spiritual life and activity.* We have here a thought like that of the Hindu philosophers of the Upanishads and the Vedanta. According to these philosophers, God is the pure intelligence, but, being infinite, has not consciousness, for there is no consciousness without duality. In Fichte's phrase, with which we are already familiar, there can be no knowledge of the Me, without that of the Not-me; and to the infinite there can be no Not-me, and thus there can be no Me.

We have here another indication that Fichte had in his mind a scheme of ontology, which he has so far not communicated to us. God, he tells us, is intelligence without consciousness. We have before seen that the moral life within us is a manifestation of the divine life; and we might suppose that this statement exhausted the thought of the life of God. The distinction that we have just noticed, shows that this would be an error. We possess intelligence, existing under the form of consciousness. If our higher life exhausted, at any one moment, the life of God, it would be as true to say that he possesses consciousness, as that he is intelligence. The fact that pure intelligence, and not consciousness, is ascribed to him, shows that there is a divine reality above and beyond our little existences. The thought of Fichte is thus seen not to be, as yet, fully stated.

* Sämmtliche Werke, V, 266.

We have thus examined the more important statements of Fichte in regard to God, as they are contained in the works of his "earlier" period. We approach his later works, not expecting to find a new philosophy, but expecting the completion, and thus the explanation, of his earlier writings.

CHAPTER XII.

ONTOLOGY.

THE work of Fichte entitled, The Way to the Blessed Life,* has been generally accepted as the best exponent of what has been often regarded as his later philosophy. In this work, he insists upon the idea of absolute being, as contrasted with existence. For this idea there seemed no basis in his earlier writings; and therefore it has been supposed that Fichte was here taking a position largely, if not wholly, different from that which he had before occupied. This view has been held, in spite of the fact that Fichte, in the preface to this work, insists that his system has undergone no change since its first utterance.

In deciding the question whether or not the assumption of a change in the philosophy of Fichte be correct, everything depends upon the sense in which the word, Being, is used. The needed explanation is found in more scientific statements, which belong also to the later period. These show that being is affirmed in a sense wholly different from that in which its reality had earlier been denied, and in a sense wholly in accord with the system of Fichte, as it had been taught from the beginning.

*Die Anweisung zum Seligen Leben; oder auch die Religionslehre.

We can best reach the thought of Fichte, by affirming with him the absoluteness of knowledge. By knowledge, he means not subjective knowledge, mine and yours, but something independent of all individual existence, the sphere in which, and through which, all individual consciousness exists. All being, he tells us, is knowledge.* By this affirmation, he excludes everything that is foreign to thought. We have what Fichte was pleased to hear described as an "inverted Spinozism." Spinoza made thought an attribute of being or substance. Fichte found being in thought itself. Fichte insisted upon the absurdity that was involved in the attempt of Spinoza to have a philosophy of being, independent of thought, whereas, so soon as we speak of being, or think of it, it has become a thought.† This idea of absolute knowledge, we have already found involved in Fichte's earlier discussion.

When we look at the matter more closely, however, we find that knowledge itself cannot be the Absolute. As Fichte phrases it, it is absolute knowledge, but not the Absolute.‡ The Absolute has no limiting epithet. It is not absolute anything; it is simply itself. When we look at the matter closely, we see that this distinction here insisted upon is nothing formal or artificial, but one to which we are driven by the processes of our own thought. The Absolute, in the strict sense of the word, must

* Alles Seyn ist Wissen.—Sämmtliche Werke, II, 35.
† Nachgelassene Werke, II, 326, et seq.
‡ Sämmtliche Werke, II, 12, 22.

be regarded as a perfect unity. Knowledge involves, by its very nature, a dualism. Knowledge implies both subject and object, even although these may not be consciously separated. If we regard our own consciousness as representing, in a concrete form, the knowledge of which Fichte speaks, the point under consideration will become clear. In consciousness we have two elements, the I and the Me. The I is not the real being manifested by the personality. It represents this being. It is its image. It is the form under which it exists; but of this being itself, we can have no conception, except that we may consider it as the ultimate reality which manifests itself through the I and the Me. Thus the absolute knowledge of which Fichte speaks is merely the existence or manifestation of the real Absolute, which can be thought of only as manifesting itself under this form. To this Absolute Fichte gives the name of God, when he uses this name in its highest and most distinctive sense. He still speaks, however, of life in that knowledge which forms the Divine existence, as life in God. The relation between knowledge — which is the form of the Divine existence — and the Absolute Being, is thus expressed in The Way to the Blessed Life: "The real life of knowledge is therefore in its root, the inner being and essence of the Absolute itself; and there is between the Absolute, or God, and knowledge, in the deepest root of its life, no difference; but the two become lost in one another." *

* Sämmtliche Werke, V, 443.

It will be seen that we are still in the sphere within which the system of Fichte would confine us from the first. There is no reality but thought, and that which is involved in the very fact of thought itself. Although the phraseology of the system sometimes resembles that of Spinoza, the difference between Fichte and Spinoza is as wide as ever, and every criticism upon Spinoza, in Fichte's earlier works, would be wholly in place in these later ones.*

The relations that have been described, and those which grew out of them, are presented by Fichte with great freedom, and under various forms. These presentations become, in some respects, more and more elaborate; the latest—those connected with his teaching in the University at Berlin — being the most marked in this respect.† While the form varies, however, the point of view and the central thought remain the same.

We have, in all presentations, the distinction between being and existence or manifestation, the nature of which I have already explained. In the more elaborate statements we have this existence presented under three forms, or stages, sometimes called the images of Himself projected by God, and sometimes the schemata under which He is manifested. The first of these is pure existence, or, more definitely, pure knowledge.

* The best introduction to Fichte's Ontology, is, perhaps, the statement of 1801 — Sämmtliche Werke, II. The idea of the Absolute is, however, brought out most fully in that of 1804 — Nachgelassene Werke, II, 87 et seq.

† Nachgelassene Werke.

This is absolute, unchanging, and unbroken. This, Fichte more than once compares to the Word, which, according to St. John, was *with* God and *was* God. This knowledge does not extend to itself. It does not involve consciousness. To the very close of his philosophical work, Fichte insisted that for consciousness there must be limitation; but this absolute knowledge has no limit, and thus no consciousness. Not only has it no consciousness; it has no power of activity — for action, no less than consciousness, implies duality.

The second of the schemata under which the Absolute Being finds its manifestation, is that by which, alone, activity and consciousness can be attained. This is Life. It is spoken of as an endless stream which concentrates itself into points of consciousness. This life, in order to attain to complete self-consciousness, requires not only the subjective element manifested in these points of concentration; it needs, also, an objective element. It must manifest itself to itself. If, for the subjective factor, it needs to concentrate itself into points, for the objective element it needs also to be broken up, to assume the form of quantification. The infinite, as such, can no more be perceived than it can perceive. This life must, therefore, manifest itself by degrees and piecemeal. It must exist under the form of time. Time is the unrolling of the panorama of endless existence. In this process of life, each individual has his place, and thus his special work, in relation to the great whole.

We have thus presented two schemata; knowledge, and knowledge of knowledge, which is consciousness. This is developed under the form of life. One more step is, however, to be taken. In life, we have self-knowledge; but it is not conscious of itself as *self*-knowledge. This self-knowledge must itself be raised to a higher power. To state this more fully: In life, the individual has knowledge. The universe of thought and life is open to it. It stands, however, more or less as a stranger. It feels itself surrounded by objects that are more or less foreign to itself. It knows; but it does not know that the object of its knowledge is itself. The third of the schemata under which absolute being is manifested, is thus the *consciousness of self-consciousness.* This highest stage is reached by philosophy. More especially is it first fully reached by the Science of Knowledge. This first attains to the thought that knowledge, not being, is the *only* object of philosophy. It first, therefore, reaches the thought of the absoluteness of knowledge; and thus does it reach the full idea that in knowledge the I finds only itself—that thereby it comes face to face with the absoluteness of its own nature.

In the study of Fichte's earlier works we were gradually approaching the results just stated. In doing this we were conscious of moving with difficulty. At every step elements were introduced that could not have been deduced from earlier stages. We started with the expectation that the system was to grow as if from a single root. At every step we

have been disappointed. Independence or self-assertion was made synonymous with duty. Why this was so we could not see. Next, we were startled with the statement that self-assertion, carried out to its absolute result, became self-effacement. Further, as the thought of the I was developed as if it stood alone, we could not understand whence came the other I's to which reference was made. Then, without explanation or preparation, appeared the great name of God. Finally, an explanation of this name was given, but one which left contradictions still to be explained.

The trouble was that we were starting at the wrong end of the system. We began, indeed, where Fichte began; but he began with what most interested him at the time, and with what he had most thoroughly wrought out. Indeed, of all his statements, none is so perfect as his first. We have seen, in the short sketch of the life of Fichte, how continually he was interrupted in his philosophic work. It must be confessed, too, that Fichte could not easily put himself into the point of view of his readers. He could not realize that they did not know all that he knew, and that, for them, there was not the same background of philosophic thought that there was for him. Thus he was surprised at misapprehensions for which he himself was largely responsible.

However all this may be, when we have reached the Ontology we have found a point of view from which the system becomes a unit. Whatever diffi-

culties or contradictions may remain, at least all those that have thus far troubled us disappear.

We now see the true nature of the I. It consists of two elements. It is at once the universal and the individual. It is one of the points of concentration at which the Absolute Life becomes conscious of itself. Its being is, then, at heart, this Absolute Life, of which it is a manifestation. We understand now something of the nature of that limit which suggests to the I, whose activity impinges upon it, the thought of the Not-me. We see now that Fichte had a definite meaning when he said that this might be only a limit. If the Absolute Life concentrates itself into a point of consciousness, this concentration implies a limit. The limit exists by the very act of concentration. We see now how it is possible that this limit should become enlarged; and whence comes the content of the endless life that shall fill out the expanding limit into infinitude. We see how it is the destiny of the soul thus to enlarge itself, to make itself free of the Not-me, which represents to it the limit within which it is inclosed. We understand thus the meaning of the demand for absolute self-assertion, and how this self-assertion is one with the absolute law of morality. The individual, affirming himself, affirms this larger life, of which he is the manifestation. Making himself free of the outward shows of things that he first takes for reality, and turning toward his own central life, he finds himself; and, finding himself, he finds that Absolute Life which is his true

self. We thus understand the nature of the fundamental truths of the reason—those which furnish the basis for all *a priori* affirmation; and we see thus how such affirmation brings with it an absolute authority, such as no *a posteriori* reasoning, based upon no matter what accumulation of phenomena, can ever have.* These truths are the expression of the Absolute Life, which forms the essence of all individual life. Since, however, this Absolute Life is a life, it will manifest itself chiefly under the form of activity. It will be not so much something to be believed, as something to be done. Since that which is to be done is the demand of the Absolute Life, it will admit of no explanation or justification. It will be a categorical imperative. It will be something original and spontaneous that requires implicit and unquestioning obedience. Thus the paradox that baffled us is removed. Self-assertion tends to self-effacement. Independence is rationality and morality in one. It is the entrance, more and more perfectly, into the Divine Life.

The so-called earlier and later systems of Fichte are seen thus to be the complemental elements of a single system. The great difference between them is found in the fact that, in his earlier works, Fichte started from psychological analysis, and moved toward an ontology; in his later works, he started from the ontology, and based his psychology directly upon this.

The Ontology, it must be noticed, does not form

*Sämmtliche Werke, II, 6.

the substance of the later statements of the Science of Knowledge. It forms simply the introduction to what is really in its aim as in its title, a *Science of Knowledge*. The later works, like the earlier, find their real inspiration in the thought of the moral law, as manifested under the form of the Categorical Imperative. If the precise forms of the earlier are not reproduced, the I and the Not-me, the impinging upon a limit, and the rest, it is because these have been, once for all, developed, and are henceforth taken for granted.

I will now state more fully the general view of the universe, upon which is based the system of Fichte.* He recognized no reality except that of God, and of finite spirits. In rejecting the imputation that he was an atheist, he claimed with right that he might more truthfully be called an akosmist. What we call the material universe is the creation of the productive imagination. By this is not meant that it is produced arbitrarily, and is thus the production of fancy. It results from the laws of the spiritual life.

The I is doubly limited. It has, first, that limit which makes it finite, that limit against which its activity impinges, and from which it is reflected back toward its source; and, secondly, it has a limitation within its nature, according to which the imagination, if it work at all, must work under such

*This part of the subject was most fully treated by Fichte, under the heading, Facts of Consciousness.—Die Thatsachen des Bewusstseyns.—Sämmtliche Werke, II, 535, et seq.—Nachgelassene Werke, I, 401, et seq.

and such forms. It is this fact which gives to the external world the permanency that we recognize. It is upon this that depends the fact that we all recognize the same world. Fichte affirms that it is a mistake to understand him to maintain that the external world is posited merely by the individual.* It is, in fact, posited by the life, which is manifested through the individual. It is thus something permanent, something in which the individual can make changes, which shall endure beyond his own life. By this is meant that the external world is posited according to a law of harmonious activity, to which all individuals are subject.

The stream of life is, as we have seen, one form of the existence or manifestation of God. The world is thus such a manifestation. In order to be such, it must obviously contain that which is Divine. It must also contain that which is not Divine; for that which is Divine can be recognized only by contrast. As has been already stated, this manifestation must be under the form of time; that is, it must be progressive. Every generation has thus its place in the great movement. There is thus a duty laid upon every period in the history of the world. We have here the foundation for a Philosophy of History, such as is indicated in the Characteristics of the Present Age,† and in the Theory of the State.‡ In this development every individual has his place. Each has a special duty and a special ideal. If he

* Sämmtliche Werke, II, 607. † Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters.— Sämmtliche Werke, VI. ‡ Staatslehre.— Sämmtliche Werke, IV.

fulfils these, then he will at last have learned the lesson of this world, and will be introduced into another and a higher; and thus shall he press on from world to world in an endless progress. If he fails of his duty, he drops out of the grand movement, and others take his place.

The power working through this grand progress of the individual and of the race, Fichte calls the Divine and Eternal Will. The word, Will, must not be understood as referring to any conscious act of Divine volition. It is taken as the best word which our human speech can offer for that which it cannot fully name. This Eternal Will manifests itself in the will of the individual, so far as this chooses the highest. In this finite will, the Absolute Will comes to a consciousness of itself. This higher Will manifests itself, indeed, in every act of the individual will; for action, so far as it goes, is life; only it is life that has not yet reached the absoluteness that belongs to it. This Infinite Will, and these finite wills in which it is embodied, furnish all the reality that there is in the world of existence. All things else are appearances that offer occasion or scope for the manifestation of this Will.

The fact that the objects that make up our world are merely appearances created by our own imagination, does not, Fichte is careful to insist, make of them illusions. He objects to Kant's use of this term. They would be illusions if there were anything more real with which to compare them. As

it is, they are the ultimate reality, and thus may be truly accepted as such.

It may be interesting to call attention to certain aspects of Fichte's view of the world that made it attractive from the point of view of religion. If it lost the help that comes from the *a posteriori* argument, it escaped the difficulties that are involved in this. The world is the projection of human spirits, and represents the stage which they have reached. God is practically recognized as an ideal, and may thus be seen in absolute beauty and completeness. One can doubt His reality and His perfection no more than one can doubt his own being. At the same time, it is affirmed, from the beginning, that it is by the Divine Life within it that the spirit presses on toward the Divine Ideal. In regard to this impulse within us, there can be as little doubt as in regard to the ideal toward which it points. God is thus recognized as the most certain of realities.

The ideal to which the soul aspires is infinite. So soon as one form has been attained, another and higher takes its place. In the fact of its impulse to attain to this ideal, the spirit finds the pledge of its own immortality.

CHAPTER XIII.

COMPARISON WITH SCHOPENHAUER AND WITH HEGEL; CRITICISM AND CONCLUSION.

THE Will, which, according to the thought of Fichte, works through all things, which is absolute, and, because absolute, unconscious of itself, suggests, naturally, a comparison between the system of Fichte and that of Schopenhauer. The two systems have great points of similarity, and of difference. Both undertake to complete the work of Kant, and to complete it in very much the same direction. Among the passages in Kant to which Schopenhauer refers as marking the point at which his system starts from that of Kant, is one that stands in close connection with that which Fichte refers to as marking the point where his own independent work began. The problems which each undertakes to solve, although at heart the same, yet present certain specific differences, which shaped the activity of each. Both undertook to bring a unity into realms which Kant left divided. While Fichte sought, however, to reduce to a unity the practical and the theoretical reasons, Schopenhauer sought to reduce to a unity the subjective and the objective worlds. The terms by which each described

reality are practically the same; both recognized the phenomenal nature of the objective world, and both used the term, Will, to express the ultimate reality in ourselves, and in the universe. The relation to one another of the realities covered by these terms was, however, different in the two systems. With Fichte, the relation between the two was carefully wrought out through the long psychological study which we have analyzed. With Schopenhauer, each was left in the independence in which it originally offers itself to us. Further, with Fichte, the world of objects, exclusive of persons, was simply the creation of the productive imagination, and represented no reality except that of the mind possessing the imagination; while to Schopenhauer, each represented a manifestation of the Absolute Will, similar to that which we find within ourselves. Thus, though the objective world, so far as its appearance is concerned, is in both systems the creation of the mind, the objective world of Schopenhauer has more reality than that of Fichte. It has indeed the same reality that is possessed by the world of persons.

The essential point of resemblance in the two systems is found in the fact that each recognizes the universe in general, and the individual in particular, as the manifestation of an Infinite Will that is never satisfied, and that through all eternity can never become satisfied. Its very being is to will, and it reaches one attainment, only to demand another. This Will demands merely for the sake of

demanding — because it is its nature to demand. It can give no reason for its volition. The resemblance of this to the Categorical Imperative of Kant, Fichte, as we have seen, insisted on, and made the basis of his thought. In the case of Schopenhauer, the resemblance is no less striking, though the Will by him is regarded from a different point of view.

The two systems being so similar in this most important respect, it is interesting to consider why one is a system of absolute pessimism, and the other is one, not indeed of optimism, but of hope and courage. This question becomes specially interesting when we consider how near Fichte himself comes to pessimism. In one place he distinctly says that the world, so far from being the best possible, is, on account of its nothingness, the worst possible.* The general course of his thought might easily lead to a pessimism precisely similar to that of Schopenhauer. As we have seen, consciousness with him springs from the fact that the will of the individual cannot accomplish itself. It comes from the disparity between the ideal and the actual. If the world conformed to our wish, we should not know it to be a world. Consciousness may thus be said to have its root and its essence in unhappiness. It will be seen how close this comes to the position of Schopenhauer in regard to happiness; namely, that what we call happiness consists only in the removal of pain; that it becomes less, the more the discomfort is lessened, and ceases when the discomfort

*Sämmtliche Werke, II, 157.

ceases. How sweet is water to one tormented by thirst! How insipid when the thirst disappears! Happiness thus always nestles in the bosom of unhappiness; it can, therefore, never be positive. It implies only a mitigation of discomfort. It is upon this fact that Schopenhauer bases his pessimism. Fichte's theory of consciousness, it is obvious, points in the same direction. If our consciousness springs from dissatisfaction, it might be urged that we are conscious only of that which is unsatisfying. We might thus seem to be approaching a pessimism precisely similar to that of Schopenhauer.

When we look more closely at the systems, we find, however, one great point of difference. The system of Fichte recognizes a goal toward which the Will is pressing. This goal, indeed, is infinitely removed, and thus can never be reached; but the movement toward it involves a gain with every advance. The object of its striving is that the life of the individual shall become one with the life of God. Though this can never be accomplished, yet the life of the individual becomes more and more a part of this Divine life, and thus acquires continually more fulness and reality. Its advance cannot be measured by its approach toward an end, for from this it must remain always infinitely removed; it can, however, be measured by its movement away from the point at which it started. As every step forward brings with it such real fruition as has been described, the fact that the progress is an endless one may add to it a new joy. It may become an

endless and glad ascent up the heights of being. The Will of Schopenhauer, on the other hand, recognizes no such ideal. It simply presses on without starting point or goal. Its course is movement, but not progress. It wills for the sake of willing. Its action is thus purely formal and without consent. Thus there is no place for the triumphant joy which furnishes its inspiration to the system of Fichte, or for the hope that, according to this system, ever leads on the soul to fresh attainments.

A comparison of the system of Fichte with that of Hegel furnishes many points of interest. The work of Fichte was unquestionably one of the most important factors in the preparation of Hegel for his career. Fichte saw more clearly than it had been seen before, what is the true nature of philosophy, and what should be the ideal toward which it should strive. He adopted the method which proved so mighty in the hands of Hegel. The dialectic process which proceeds from simple affirmation, through negation, to that higher affirmation which springs from the negation of the negation, was the pulse beat of the system of Fichte, as it became afterward that of Hegel's. Thesis, antithesis, and synthesis furnish the formula according to which the thought of Fichte developed itself. This involves a practical difficulty similar to that which so many have found in the study of Hegel. A proposition is given as if it were final. The student rests in that, and thinks he has found something that is fixed. Soon, however, he finds that

this was only a temporary result which is to be broken up by some new analysis. In the case of both Fichte and Hegel, many have not discovered the mistake. They have learned their lesson and remembered it; and have supposed that they have thus the final word of the master.

If Fichte was the first to recognize this method, it must be confessed that Hegel has used it with the greatest skill. As so often happens in the case of discovery or invention, the method of Fichte was carried to a greater perfection in other hands than it reached in his own. A single example may illustrate this. It seemed a marvellous audacity in Fichte, that he undertook to create a system out of two propositions, that of identity and that of contradiction. Hegel, however, with an audacity yet more startling, undertook to reduce these two propositions to one; developing the proposition of negation out of the very heart of the affirmation itself. Another illustration, on a larger scale, of the greater fineness and completeness of the work of Hegel, considered in its formal aspect, may be found in the relation of the individual to the universal. Fichte tells us simply that the Absolute Life concentrates itself into points of consciousness. This statement is inclusive of the greater part of the system of Hegel. What Fichte states in a single proposition is thus by Hegel expanded into a dialectic process which taxes our severest thought, as we follow the steps by which Absolute Being becomes spirit. Some parts of his system Fichte, indeed,

wrought out with a skill that could not be surpassed; but, on the whole, it is Hegel who makes us feel ourselves most really in the presence of the master of a constructive dialectic.

In regard to the content of the two systems we find also both resemblance and contrast. I shall not undertake to pronounce upon any of the vexed questions in regard to the position of Hegel; and thus our comparison must be less absolute than if we could assume this position to have been in accordance with one or the other of the views ascribed to him. The so-called left wing of the Hegelian school will, however, serve our purpose best. According to the interpretation of this school, Hegel taught that Absolute Being, which is in itself one with Absolute Thought, comes to consciousness of itself only in the individual spirit. This is so far the position also of Fichte. With him, Absolute Knowledge, in which Being or God exists, comes to self-consciousness in the individual. So far as I have noticed, however, the writers of the school of Hegelians to which I have referred, emphasize one side of this relationship, while Fichte emphasized the other. With them, I think, the emphasis is more often placed on the negative side of the statement; namely, that only in man is God conscious. With Fichte, however, the emphasis is wholly different. He wrote under the inspiration of the most sublime consciousness of God. The fact that the life of the individual is a manifestation of the Infinite and the Divine Life, filled him with awe, and was the source,

as it was the outcome, of the loftiest religious enthusiasm.

This last point suggests a great difference between the systems of Fichte and Hegel. I refer to the lofty moral sense which is manifested at every page of the writings of Fichte. This morality, which, as he developed his Ontology, became love, was, with him, the fundamental principle. Being was not, as with Hegel, thought. Its movement was not a dialectic process merely. Being, in the practical application of that word, was life; it was righteousness, it was love. Hegel thus remains the master in the world of thought; Fichte, in that of life.

In the examination that has been made of the philosophy of Fichte I have rarely paused to criticise his methods or results; nor shall I now enter into any detailed criticism. It is important, however, to recognize in a general way the limitations of his work. It must, then, be stated that no part of his system is presented with the same elaboration and finish that we find in his first statement. The statement of 1801,* which students have too little noticed, stands, in my judgment, next to this. His System of Ethics† is a noble work. It opens grandly, and throws new light on the psychology which had been before developed. It is inspiring, from the grand conception of life which it embodies. When we come to the deduction of special duties, we are, however, often disappointed. The principle upon

*Sämmtliche Werke, II. †Same, IV.

which the duty is based is unequal to its support. Thus the absolute condemnation of falsehood is one of the most marked features of Fichte's moral system; under no circumstances must a lie be uttered. When Fichte comes to seek the reason for this requirement, he finds it in the fact that, while rationality of life is the demand that is made upon all men, rationality is impossible if men have a false conception of their surroundings. If we lie, we give men a false impression, and take from them the possibility of reasonable conduct.* It is easy to see that this principle would prove too much. We as truly make it impossible for men to act with rationality by keeping back the truth, as by saying what is false; and yet such silence is suggested by Fichte as a method of avoiding a lie. Further, the exercise of force takes from the person to whom it is applied the power to act rationally; and yet Fichte admits the right of using force in order to prevent an individual from invading the rights of others.† If we may use force to protect the community from a man who is hopelessly irrational, why may we not use a lie to protect the community from one who defies the laws of true living. When we read this deduction, we know that Fichte's reverence for truthfulness rested on a foundation more deep and more strong than this. Other examples might be given to illustrate the imperfection of the detailed practical application by Fichte of his ethical principles, and to

* Sämmtliche Werke, IV, 282, et seq.
† Sämmtliche Werke, III, 137, et seq.

show how the work which begins with a tone as authoritative and inspiring as that of conscience itself, loses much of this power when it would enforce the special practical duties of life.

The later philosophical works of Fichte failed to satisfy himself. He rewrought his system time and again, with each presentation claiming that he had reached a perfection of statement of which he had failed before; each being thus an implied criticism upon its predecessor. The last, in which he makes this claim with special confidence, was broken off midway by the troubles of the times. In his more popular writings are found, as it appears to me, the best fruition of his later years.

Turning now to the content of his works, we meet an antinomy which runs through his whole system like a discord that is never really solved. This is the antinomy that grows out of the relations of the Me and the Not-me. This is at first, as we have seen, openly recognized, and is practically solved by reducing the Thing-in-itself, which is the source of the contrast, to a mere limit; while, later, the impression of dualism is removed by finding that this limit is simply the boundary line that separates the individual from the universal. This limit is needed, as we have seen, because the I, being absolute self-affirmation, could not limit itself by positing, by its own spontaneous act, its opposite. This centre of personal consciousness is produced by the fact that the Absolute Stream of Life concentrates itself into these eddies of individuality, in order that

consciousness may be attained. The same question that met us in regard to the individual might be urged in regard to this vaster life. *How can this Absolute Life limit itself*, as this hypothesis supposes? It is a real limitation of itself that is posited. It not only breaks itself up into these centres of consciousness, but it breaks itself up also in its manifestation. It subjects itself to the limits of time, and presents itself by piecemeal. The difficulty here, had it occurred to Fichte, would have been as great as in the case of the individual. We need here, also, a something the opposite of the Life, against which the Life may dash and be broken into the spray of countless individualities. Thus the ghost of the Thing-in-itself is not yet laid.

The fact that the contradiction between absoluteness and finiteness remains unsolved at the end of Fichte's discussion, shows that he had not found the secret that he sought. The difficulty with his system is that from first to last it is based, in part, upon mechanical conceptions. We have noticed this, already, in his deduction of perception. From this comes whatever is hard and unsatisfactory in the system of Fichte. In this we find the explanation of the fundamental difficulty to which reference has just been made,— that in regard to the fact of consciousness. Consciousness is looked upon as something accidental, that must be explained from without, and not as something that is involved in the very idea of being. The process which manifested itself in consciousness was not seen to be, in its absolute

form, one of self-mediation, but was thought to be something that, in some mechanical way, must be set in motion from without. If Fichte had seen, as he came so near seeing, that the spirit is absolute, not merely absolute spirit,* but *the* Absolute, and that the process by which spirit is spirit, is its very being, he would not have needed these mechanical appliances. He would have seen that the infinite can be conceived only as spirit, because in spirit alone do we find unity and diversity, each growing out of the other. If we start from our finite spirits, the idea of infinite spirit would still be an ideal to be eternally approached, and never reached; but if we start from the idea of the infinite, the infinite spirit must be recognized as an eternal reality. Hegel, by identifying thought and being, broke down the barrier that repressed the speculation of Fichte, and life took the place of mechanism.

Another indication of the limitation of Fichte's system, or of his nature, may be found in the slight attention that is given to æsthetics. The outer world being only the reflex of the human spirit, there would seem to be little place for a philosophy of beauty. We must not forget, however, the important work done in this direction by Kant, whose system was no more favorable to these results than that of Fichte, and whose circumstances were far less so. Fichte, at one time, hoped to apply his sys-

*Compare Sämmtliche Werke, II, 22: Das Wissen ist nicht das Absolute; aber es ist selbst als Wissen absolute.

tem to æsthetics; but his nature was too ethical and active to feel much real attraction in that direction. He looks at this matter as at all others, from the ethical standpoint. Beauty, in his view, is the manifestation of the ideal in nature: and the ideal belongs to the inner life of the spirit. Thus in the contemplation of beauty, the limitations of the material and the sensuous are broken through, and the spirit returns to itself. The enjoyment of beauty is thus not virtue — it is the preparation for virtue;* in which statement we see, perhaps, the result of the influence of Schiller. The profound recognition of the beauty of nature must rather come, one would think, from the recognition of the reality of the ideal, as it is manifested over against the spirit, and is not merely a projection from it. For this, however, the philosophy of Fichte could have no place. In another passage he affirms that the physical expression of a man lost in the contemplation of an idea, is the only object of the art of the sculptor and painter† — the word, Idea, being always used by Fichte in its highest sense.

While we thus recognize the limitations of Fichte, we must not fail to recognize the greatness of the results that were reached by him. We may say with Herbart, one of his keenest critics, that he gave to philosophy a new problem, the problem of the I.‡ We may add that he gave to it a new

* Sittenlehre, Sämmtliche Werke, IV, 355.
† Die Grundzüge, etc., Sämmtliche Werke, VII, 59.
‡ Herbart's Sämmtliche Werke, III, 266.

method, that of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis; and that he gave to it a new ideal, that of unity of principle and result. He sought to restore to philosophy its old meaning, to make it a love of wisdom rather than of mere knowledge; a power in the life, more truly than a speculation of the thought. An earnest student of Fichte, though the world might have a reality for him that it had not for the master, could never, it would seem, be lost among the sophistries of a superficial materialism; nor could the ideas of freedom and duty ever be wholly without power over his heart.